Comparing subnational governance systems for sustainable development: degrees of autonomy and challenges to vertical policy integration

Paper to be presented at the 2009 Amsterdam Conference on the Human Dimensions of Global Environmental Change, 2-4 December, at Amsterdam

conference panel: Architecture for Vertical Interplay

Sander Happaerts
Institute for International and European Policy, KULeuven
sander.happaerts@soc.kuleuven.be

Abstract

In both academic and policy circles there is wide consensus that sustainable development (SD) needs to be tackled at all levels of governance, from global to local. Efforts of different governments, in addition, need to be integrated, both horizontally and vertically. While international, national and local efforts have received wide attention, little is known about existing governance initiatives at the subnational level. Subnational entities, however, have an important role to play since they are often responsible for the implementation of national and international policies. This paper wants to identify existing challenges to vertical policy integration by investigating the strategies used by subnational entities to deal with complex multi-level architectures for SD. Four cases are compared: North Holland (the Netherlands), North Rhine-Westphalia (Germany), Flanders (Belgium) and Quebec (Canada). The Regional Authority Index *shows that the four cases vary in their degree of autonomy, both with regard to the competences they have within their own borders (self-rule), as to the influence they can exert in national policy and decision-making (shared rule). A subnational government's degree of autonomy grants it certain rights to play a role in national SD policies, but it also comes with responsibilities. How do subnational entities deal with the autonomy they have (or do not have) in the context of SD? Which linkages exist between the subnational and the national governance system for SD and how are those linkages used by the subnational entities? The author analyzes to which degree the coherence between SD policies at the national and subnational levels is influenced by the degree of autonomy of subnational governments. The paper also looks at the strategies applied by the subnational governments to influence national policy-making on SD. The comparative research applied in this paper is aimed at identifying both impeding factors and opportunities for vertical policy integration.*

Contents

Introduction

Sustainable development (SD) needs to be tackled at different levels of governance, from global to local. The research in this paper approaches SD from the perspective of subnational governments. It zooms in on vertical policy integration, one of the key governance requirements of SD (Steurer 2009). Previous research addressing vertical policy integration mainly departs from the national level. Yet an important question is also how subnational governments deal with the challenge of vertical policy integration for SD. The assumption studied in this paper is that their strategy is determined by their degree of autonomy. The paper starts with a conceptual reflection on vertical policy integration for SD and on the degree of autonomy of subnational governments. Subsequently, four cases are compared: North Holland (the Netherlands), North Rhine-Westphalia (Germany), Flanders (Belgium) and Quebec (Canada). The comparative analysis then serves to identify patterns of vertical policy integration and to verify the link with degrees of autonomy.

Vertical policy integration for sustainable development

While the multiple interpretations, uses and abuses of SD seem to uncover a lack of consensus about its meaning, nobody seems to contest the fact that SD is about integration. Integration, indeed, is one of the most commonly cited policy principles of SD (Bruyninckx 2006: 268; Steurer 2009: 4; Zaccaï 2002: 39). Policy integration, it is said, should be both horizontal (among different policy domains) as well as vertical (across different levels of governance). The emphasis on policy integration in the SD paradigm should not be surprising, since the lack of policy integration—i.e. the tendency to develop sectoral policies independently from

one another and in an isolated manner vis-à-vis other levels of governance—is one of the main causes of the problems which SD aims to resolve (Bornemann 2008).

In this paper, my interest goes out to vertical policy integration. Since the very conception of SD, the integration of policies among different levels of governance has been called for in many international policy documents. Indeed, the *World Conservation Strategy*, where the concept of SD appears prominently for the first time, already hints at integration across different governmental levels (IUCN 1980: §8.1). The Brundtland report, which put SD conceptually on the map, does not explicitly address vertical policy integration. It is mainly aimed at giving policy guidance to national governments, while also stressing the need for international cooperation and local initiatives. Yet on a few occasions Brundtland does point out the need for a change of paradigm "at all levels", without further specification (WCED 1987: xiv, 62). In contrast to the Brundtland report, *Agenda 21*, the global action plan agreed at the 1992 Rio Summit, is slightly more explicit, calling for "the integration of economic, social and environmental considerations in decision-making at all levels" (UNCED 1992: §8.4a, see also §8.4c). It also prescribes that national governments cooperate with international organizations to strengthen the capacity for policy integration at all levels (UNCED 1992: §8.12). Five years later, a special session of the General Assembly, 'Rio +5', urged for increased vertical policy integration. It warned that SD would not be achieved "without greater integration at all policy-making levels and at operational levels, including the lowest administrative levels possible" (UNGASS 1997: §24). At the 2002 Johannesburg Summit, policy-makers again stressed the involvement of all levels of governance and called for integrated approaches and for strengthened coherence (WSSD 2002, e.g. §21, §139). The global call for integrated action at all levels is echoed by the OECD, which has published many authoritative guidelines on SD policies. In its reports, the OECD pleads for a real integration of the efforts of different levels of governance, notably to achieve a successful implementation of global commitments (OECD 2001a: 51; 2002a: 19, 33; 2002b: 3, 6).

The previous overview shows a broad consensus within international policy documents on the fact that coherent action at all levels of governance is needed to pursue the SD agenda. That is why SD has often been approached through the analytical paradigm of Multi-Level Governance. This framework, traditionally used in the analysis of EU policy-making, studies governance processes as an interaction between different governmental levels that are interdependent, and in which nation states are not the sole actors anymore. A distinction is made here between the global, the regional (e.g. European), the national, the subnational[1] and the local (or municipal) levels of governance. In a multi-level setting, all these levels have their own stake and responsibilities in governance for SD. *Global multilateral institutions,*

---

[1] I define a *subnational entity* as "a coherent territorial entity situated between local and national levels with a capacity for authoritative decision-making" (Marks et al. 2008, page 113). This entails entities such as provinces, (micro-)regions or states. I use the term 'region(al)', in contrast, to denote the level of governance above the nation-state, e.g. the EU, as is common in International Relations theory and the literature on global governance.

especially the organizations of the UN system, fulfil a key promoting role. Those organizations play an important part in agenda-setting and the definition of global goals, and they function as significant information-sharing platforms (Van den Brande 2009b: 3). These global institutions are also the ones that set out the major deadlines for other actors to observe. *Regional organizations* can play a similar role and often function as intermediaries between global multilateral institutions and national governments. In Europe, for example, the EU's SD Strategy is said to have influenced the policies of lower levels, notably with regard to the thematic challenges (Paredis 2008: 13-14; RIMAS 2009: 40). Moreover, authors have observed the role of the EU's Structural Funds in promoting SD through capacity-building at the subnational level (Berger 2003: 228; Berger and Steurer 2008: 45). As for *national governments*, although Multi-Level Governance de-emphasizes their role, they still retain the key responsibility of steering their societies in a more sustainable direction, in cooperation with non-governmental actors and lower levels of governance (Dryzek 2005: 155-156; Jörgensen 2004: 29; OECD 2001b: 27). The role of *subnational governments* is significant for two reasons. First, they are often responsible for the implementation of national and international policies with regard to SD (Jörgensen 2007: 156; OECD 2001a: 51; 2002a: 19). Second, they are said to be closer to citizens and stakeholders, which is vital for any SD process (Baker et al. 1997: 22; Berger 2003: 226; Jörgensen 2002: 1-2). Berger and Steurer (2008: 32) therefore consider subnational entities as the ideal level to tackle problems related to SD. Finally, more than the subnational level, the level of *local authorities* (mostly municipalities) has received wide attention. Notably because of their ability to bring together citizens and important stakeholders within a specific local context, the efforts of local authorities are considered to contribute in a crucial way to the global SD agenda (Brugmann 1996). The most visible application at the local level is the spread of local Agenda 21 initiatives to translate the global concept of SD into a local setting (Lafferty 2001). In addition, cities and municipalities join in transnational associations (e.g. ICLEI) to exchange best practices and express their voice in global policy and decision-making (Bruyninckx 2006: 281-282).

In a Multi-Level Governance framework, it is thus clear that all levels of governance play their part in the pursuit of SD. A general trend is that higher levels are expected to set goals and directions and to provide 'steering', while lower levels are mainly looked at in terms of concrete implementation and context-specific solutions (see also Baker and Eckerberg 2008: 10). It is important to point out, however, that the main global policy documents advance the demand for vertical policy integration mainly as an obligation for sovereign national governments, in their view that those are the main actors negotiating international action and that only they can decide how to organize cooperation with lower levels of governance within their own borders.

Yet the international texts remain fairly vague on what vertical policy integration really consists of. It thus seems useful to turn to the academic world and gain insights from existing

characterizations of this form of policy integration. Brown specifies that vertical policy integration "implies *linking* discrete levels of governance, from local to international, and institutions across different levels" (Brown 2009: 38, emphasis added). Berger and Steurer have a more concrete characterization, referring to vertical policy integration as "the *coordination* of various policies between the different levels of government" (Berger and Steurer 2008: 31, emphasis added). A recent study commissioned by the Committee of the Regions identifies "coordination in objective-setting, competence distribution and development of provisions and measures across multiple tiers of government" as the content of vertical policy integration (RIMAS 2009: 64). Berger and Steurer specify that such coordination has the aim "to achieve *coherence* between activities at the different political levels, from policy generation to implementation" (Berger and Steurer 2008: 31, emphasis added). Similarly, Bruyninckx understands the principle of vertical policy integration as "the need to come to better policy coherence between different levels of policy-making and implementation, for example, the local, regional and national" (Bruyninckx 2006: 269). The notion of coherence is in agreement with Underdal's criterion of consistency. In the first academic treatment of policy integration, Underdal stipulates that integrated policies need to be consistent, meaning that all policy components, including across different levels of governance, are in accord with each other (Underdal 1980: 159, cited in Lafferty and Hovden 2003: 8).

A literature scan thus points out that academics understand vertical policy integration as the coherence of policies across levels of governance by means of establishing linkages between them, or evolving towards genuine coordinated policy-making (which comprises objective-setting, competence distribution and the development of instruments)[2]. How such integration should take place, however, appears underdeveloped by researchers. Only a few authors develop such an operationalization. Berger and Steurer (2008: 31), for example, put forward that vertical policy integration can involve mechanisms such as framework legislation and coordinating bodies. In a recent study on the contributions of subnational and local authorities in national SD processes within the EU, Berger and Sedlacko (2009) identify four types of involvement:

- involvement in general consultation processes for SD;
- membership or involvement in SD councils and/or in interministerial/interdepartmental SD committees;
- institutionalized mechanisms for better coordination; and
- links between national strategies for SD (SSDs)[3] and subnational or local SD activities.

---

[2] The understanding of vertical policy integration in this paper differs from that of some other authors, such as Lafferty and Hovden (2003: 12-14), who use the term 'vertical (environmental) policy integration' to denote coherence within a single policy domain at a certain level of governance, from ministerial commitment down to concrete implementation on the ground. Bornemann (2008: 15) names that phenomenon 'intra-policy integration'. Steurer and Martinuzzi (2005: 461) call it 'cross-horizontal integration'.

[3] In *Agenda 21* national governments agreed to develop a national strategy for SD (SSD) (UNCED 1992: §8.7). SSDs are meant to harmonize existing strategies and plans operating in a specific country and could be seen as

In the literature on federalism (e.g. Meekison 2002; Swenden 2006: 188-241) and in the field of public administration in general (e.g. Peters and Pierre 2001; Radin 2003), scholars study the phenomenon of inter-governmental relations. Although they are not primarily concerned with strategies for increased vertical policy integration, the insights of their field of study can also be interesting for the purpose of this paper. Radin, for instance, identifies four categories of instruments for intergovernmental relations:

- *structural instruments*, which use patters of responsibilities, authorities and leadership to shape intergovernmental relations; these instruments involve *inter alia* commissions or other institionalized mechanisms aimed at coordination;
- *programmatic instruments*, using resources and redesign of programs and grant types;
- *research and capacity-building instruments*, involving 'empowerment';
- *behavioural instruments*, which mostly involve targeted communication in order to prevent intergovernmental conflicts (Radin 2003).

Those different instruments can also function as mechanisms for better policy coherence in the area of SD. In combination with the mechanisms identified by Berger and Sedlacko they will be used to guide the description of the case studies. Intergovernmental relations and vertical policy integration for SD are linked. Lafferty and Meadowcroft (2000b) demonstrate that central governments in general have taken steps to involve subnational and local levels in governance for SD, albeit in different ways. The pattern according to which this interaction takes place depends on the character of intergovernmental linkages operating in a certain country. They show, moreover, that in some countries SD has been invoked to justify shifts of duties between different levels, although it has never led to major transformations in territorial governance (Lafferty and Meadowcroft 2000b: 373-375).

Not surprisingly, a large part of the research already conducted approaches vertical policy integration for SD from the perspective of national governments. It usually concludes that vertical policy integration is weak and more efforts should be undertaken to strengthen it (Berger and Steurer 2008: 46; Niestroy 2005: 33; Steurer and Martinuzzi 2005: 462). In this paper, I want to investigate how the issue of vertical policy integration for SD is being tackled by subnational governments[4]. I believe such an approach might be able to offer some new insights into this issue, which, although it is critical in the pursuit of SD, still generates more questions than solutions. More concretely, I want to find out what strategies subnational governments apply in this matter, and whether and how they seek to align their policies upon governance processes at higher levels.

---

the main formulation of a government's intention to embed SD in its policies. Yet SSDs are only one component of governance for SD, as Meadowcroft (2007: 158) points out.

[4] My personal research interest goes out to subnational governments and their policies on SD. This paper reflects a part of a PhD project on governance for SD at the subnational level. The author seeks to compare the policies of Flanders, Wallonia, North Rhine-Westphalia, North Holland and Quebec and identify the factors influencing subnational SD policies. The research is funded by the Flemish Policy Research Centre for SD (2007-2011) (www.steunpuntDO.be).

My assumption is that subnational governments' strategies towards vertical policy integration for SD is to a large extent determined by their degree of autonomy and by the competences that they have. Those factors are cited as a major determining variable of subnational policies within the literature on comparative regionalism and federalism (Keating and McEwen 2005: 417; Marks et al. 2008: 111; McEwen 2005: 550). The next section addresses the operationalization of the degree of autonomy of subnational entities.

Sustainable development and degrees of autonomy

In the study on governance for SD, several leading authors have pointed out that the distribution of power is an important factor to consider. Meadowcroft (2008: 113), for instance, argues that 'distributed power' can be an obstacle for the steering capacity of states which he considers vital in the pursuit of SD (see also Berger 2003). The importance of distributed power is also acknowledged by Dryzek (2005: 154), who states that SD discourse often contains pleas for shifts in power between different levels. Distributed power, of course, is a very broad problem and can be understood in different contexts. It can mean, for example, distribution of responsibilities or competences between different levels of governance, between governments and non-governmental actors, or between different actors within a single government. In this paper I only look at the distribution of competences between the national and subnational governments of a particular country.

In comparative research on national SD policies, is has been suggested that federal countries encounter more problems regarding vertical policy integration than non-federal or unitary countries, notably with regard to the effectiveness of intergovernmental coordination or the reconciliation of national and subnational priorities, with an incoherence of policies as a result (Bachus et al. 2004: 247; Jörgensen 2002: 4; Lafferty and Meadowcroft 2000a: 427; 2000b: 375; OECD 2002a: 20-21). Furthermore, the OECD (2001b: 45) warns that the distribution of competences with regard to SD can lead to overlapping or competing strategies and to the waste of administrative and intellectual resources. The OECD therefore argues that a decentralization of responsibilities to the subnational level requires a strong effort for vertical policy integration (OECD 2001a: 51). Nevertheless, scholars also indicate that the decentralization of responsibilities related to SD can be an opportunity. Especially in cases where national governments are reluctant to move forward on the issue, subnational governments can take the lead and develop innovative SD policies (Jörgensen 2004: 31; 2007: 145, 154; Meadowcroft 2008: 114-115). Federal systems are regarded as favourable to experimentation and fostering learning about innovative governance approaches (Bomberg 2004: 17; Jörgensen 2007; Meadowcroft 2008: 115; see also Rose 1991: 23).

To think that the distribution of powers and responsibilities with regard to SD is only an issue in federal countries, would be an easy mistake. Instead, Steurer and Martinuzzi (2005: 462) rightly argue that SD cuts across different governmental levels in any country, no matter

how centralized, notably with regard to domains such as transport or spatial planning. Moreover, Lafferty and Meadowcroft (2000b: 376) demonstrate that SD has produced a growth in intergovernmental relations everywhere, including in unitary countries. This confirms that SD is by definition a multi-level issue and one in which vertical policy integration merits the attention of both policy-makers and academics. Both the group of federal countries and the group of unitary countries are internally very diverse. Moreover, this distinction does not specify what subnational governments can do with regard to policy-making within their borders, which is also an important factor to consider. Instead of using the federal-unitary distinction as a main variable, I look at the degree of autonomy of subnational entities, for which federalism is not an indicator. To measure the degree of autonomy, I use the *Regional Authority Index* recently developed by Hooghe et al. (2008a). Based on a number of variables, this index gives an indication of the autonomy of subnational governments, as it intends to measure the extent to which they exercise formal authority. The index contains two components. *Self-rule* is the subnational governments' independence to exercise authority within their own jurisdictions. *Shared rule* refers to their capacity to shape national decision-making (Marks et al. 2008: 114-115)[5]. In the remainder of this paper, I examine the relation between the degree of autonomy of subnational governments and their strategies towards vertical policy integration for SD.

Two *research questions* are addressed. First, what is the degree of autonomy of subnational entities within their own borders (self-rule) and how does it affect their SD policy, e.g. with regard to goals and instruments? This gives an indication of the coherence between the national and the subnational SD policies. Second, which authority do subnational governments have to shape national decision-making (shared rule) and how does it affect their strategy towards the SD policy of the national government? This question allows me to investigate which role subnational governments play in national policy-making for SD. Overall, this paper aims to gain insights into vertical policy integration for SD seen from the angle of subnational governments, by investigating the importance of their degree of autonomy. In the analysis I compare four subnational governments with a varying degree of autonomy, both with regard to self-rule as with regard to shared rule: North Holland (the Netherlands), North Rhine-Westphalia (Germany), Flanders (Belgium) and Quebec (Canada). Table 1 displays the scores on self-rule and shared rule of those four cases.

---

[5] Self-rule is composed by four indicators: 'institutional depth', 'policy scope', 'fiscal autonomy' and 'representation'. Shared rule consists of 'law making', 'executive control', 'fiscal control' and 'constitutional reform' (Hooghe et al. 2008a).

Table 1 Degree of autonomy of selected cases (source: Hooghe et al. 2008a)

	self-rule (maximum: 15)	shared rule (maximum: 9)
North Holland	8	6.5
North Rhine-Westphalia	12	9
Flanders	13	7
Quebec	15	5

Case studies

The four case studies start with a brief discussion of the degree of autonomy, both with regard to self-rule and shared rule, and of the practice of intergovernmental relations. Subsequently, the national SD policy of the country and the SD policy of the subnational government itself are shortly presented. Next, I investigate the role of the subnational government in the implementation of the national SD policy and how that relates to its own SD policy. Finally, I look at the possible influence of the subnational governments in shaping the national SD policy. Berger and Sedlacko's and Radin's classifications are used to conceptually distinguish between different mechanisms of vertical policy integration. In order to answer the two research questions, reference is made to the subnational governments' degree of autonomy. The order in which the cases are discussed follows their increasing degree of self-rule. The empirical material for the analysis was partly distilled from previous analyses of (mainly national) SD policies, but above all from a large amount of interviews conducted in the four cases, with political and administrative officials and with experts, both at the national as well as at the subnational level[6].

North Holland: no climate for integration

The Dutch provinces have a low score on self-rule. The Netherlands, indeed, is mostly regarded as a typical unitary state (Hulst 2005). Although the provinces have an 'open household'—i.e. in principle they can act in every domain they want—their tasks are often restricted to the implementation of national policies. Yet if the Netherlands is a unitary state, it is certainly a decentralized unitary state (Coenen 2008: 191). Provinces share powers with local authorities in several areas going from culture to infrastructure (Hooghe et al. 2008b: 199). In addition, over the past decades they have increasingly been active in environmental protection, agriculture and transport, and they received new tasks in social and economic policies (Hendriks 2001: 149). The most important powers of the Dutch provinces concern spatial planning (Hulst 2005: 100; OECD 2002a: 232). Their extensive spatial planning responsibilities give them influence in other policy areas as well. In that dynamic they assume a coordinating and steering role, and have enough manoeuvring space for their own policy

---

[6] A list with interviewees can be obtained from the author. The analysis is a partial snapshot of ongoing research.

accents. With those new tasks, the profile of the province is changing towards an organizing role, with the aim of achieving more coordination and integration (Dieperink and Driessen 2007: 249; Driessen 2000: 166-181). In recent debates, the province is often described as a 'director' (*regisseur*). The Dutch provinces are for instance well-equipped to mobilize relevant players within a specific policy issue and stimulate interaction between them (Driessen 2000: 165; Hendriks 2001: 149). Yet in their role as directors, provinces are to a large extent dependent on the other levels of government with regard to certain policy instruments and financial resources (Dieperink and Driessen 2007: 249). Their fiscal autonomy is limited (Hooghe et al. 2008b: 218). On shared rule, the Dutch provinces receive a relatively high score, mainly due to the fact that provinces are the unit of representation in the upper house of the Dutch parliament (Hooghe et al. 2008b: 248). In practice, however, their role in national policy and decision-making is small. Although different pressure mechanisms exist, cooperation between the national and the provincial level will usually target the implementation of policies exclusively. Such cooperation often has a highly contractual character (Dieperink and Driessen 2007: 259). The Dutch provinces thus have a low degree of autonomy, but still some important responsibilities which allows them to play a steering role. I therefore expect a high degree of vertical policy integration in the case of North Holland, with an emphasis on the implementation of national SD policy and a profiling of the province as a 'director'.

When it comes to long-term strategic planning to promote SD, the Dutch approach to environmental planning is considered as pioneering (Jänicke and Jörgens 1998). Since the adoption of the first *National Environmental Policy Plan* in 1989, the Netherlands is considered a front-runner (Niestroy 2005: 208). The plan and its successors were considered as the Dutch SSD, with SD being interpreted as the integration of environmental concerns into other policy areas (Lundqvist 2004: 113; Niestroy 2005: 209). The Netherlands, which is reputed to initiate policies before other countries (Brans and Maes 2001: 224), also has a strong tradition in policy-making on certain key areas of SD, such as climate change or energy (e.g. in the context of transition management). This early approach has been evaluated as being very ambitious on goals, but rather ambivalent on actions (van Muijen 2000). In the run-up to the Johannesburg Summit, the Dutch government decided to develop a truly national SSD, rather late in comparison to other OECD countries. Political instability during the time lowered the ambition of the document (Niestroy 2005: 209-210). In 2003, an Action Programme for SD was published in two parts, a national and an international one. The international part, lead by the Foreign Ministry, focuses on the Johannesburg's WEHAB themes (Water, Energy, Health, Agriculture, Biodiversity). The national part additionally focuses on population, mobility, sustainable production and consumption, and knowledge. Yet the Action Programme mostly refers to existing policy processes when it comes to concrete goals and instruments. Respondents confirm it had little impact and should rather be considered as an attempt to meet the international call for the development of an SSD. Since

2005, attention for SD again grew stronger, partly because of the political momentum that was created internationally on climate change. The peer review that was conducted on the Dutch SD policy (in the context of the EU SD Strategy) also played a triggering role (see Dalal-Clayton and Krikhaar 2007). SD was mentioned prominently in the 2006 coalition agreement. Informal interdepartmental cooperation followed, which eventually resulted in the publication of the Cabinet-wide Approach on SD in 2008. This approach is meant to carry out the new coalition's intention, and consists of three tracks: sustainable governmental management, societal dialogue on SD, and progress on selected themes, which are highly focused on climate change and biodiversity[7]. The Netherlands does not have an SD Council. Progress on the Cabinet-wide Approach on SD is now reported to parliament and takes into account, among other things, the *Sustainability Monitor* collectively published by the different planning bureaus in 2009. Interdepartmental cooperation remains informal, but since 2008 it takes place both on an lower administrative level, as well as on the level of directors-general. The political responsibility for SD has not been specifically assigned. Behind the scenes, however, the Environment Ministry continues to play an important role.

In North Holland, SD appears high on the political agenda. In the coalition agreement of the current executive council[8], for instance, SD is included as a key objective. Yet in contrast to some other provinces, North Holland does not have an overarching policy document on SD. In many policy areas, however, SD is mentioned as the guiding framework, such as in environmental planning, agriculture or economic policy. But the political discourse of North Holland most notably links SD to its policy on climate change. Increasingly climate change is a key policy issue in North Holland. This has many reasons, including the international policy agenda and the inclusion of the Greens in the coalition since 2003. It is also socio-geographically motivated, since the province of North Holland is particularly vulnerable to sea level rises. But in my view, the focus on climate change within the SD agenda is also linked to North Holland's scope of competences. Because of their relatively high autonomy within the domain of spatial planning, the Dutch provinces are important partners in the battle against climate change. Climate policy (e.g. adaptation measures or renewable energy projects) has an important spatial dimension, so provinces can make a difference. One of the most important accents in the North Holland climate policy is the development of wind energy, for which North Holland is ideally located. The province also introduced a 'climate test', applied to important council decisions in areas such as spatial planning, transport and water.

In a document leading up to the 2003 Action Programme, the Dutch Environment Ministry requests the provinces (as well as communities and water boards) to develop their

---

[7] The themes are water and climate adaptation; sustainable energy; biofuels and development; CO_2 capture and storage; biodiversity, alimentation and meat; and sustainable building.
[8] The provincial executive council (or States-Deputed) consists of members elected by the States-Provincial, the provincial assembly. The executive council is chaired by the Queen's Commissioner, appointed by the national government (Hooghe et al. 2008b: 229).

own SSD, partly to help implement the national strategy (Ministerie van VROM 2002: 72). Yet in the eventual Action Programme that call is not repeated. In the current Cabinet-wide Approach the provinces are not mentioned at all, although one of its main tracks is to engage in a societal dialogue. The provinces do not have a role to play in the implementation of the Dutch SD policy (Niestroy 2005: 205). This stands in contrast with the sectoral cooperation on specific themes, such as environment and spatial planning, where much coordination is done between national and provincial governments. Since 2009, cooperation is also strengthened in the field of climate change, with the Climate and Energy Agreement between State and Provinces. The only mechanism for vertical policy integration for SD is a link between the national SD policy and provincial SD initiatives in the form of a nationally financed programme called *Learning for SD*. This programme, which exists since 2003, is intended to anchor SD within provinces (among other beneficiaries) by means of financing projects to promote SD and investing in capacity-building. It is thus a programmatic and a capacity-building instrument. Each province has to develop an ambition statement, confirmed by the executive council, in which it expresses its view on SD and the priority themes to be supported by the programme. Climate change is the main theme in North Holland's ambition statement. The document intends to bridge the gap between the general approach on SD and the provincial climate policy.

The provinces' weak (even inexistent) role in the implementation of the Dutch SD policy is paralleled by their lack of influence in SD policy-making. North Holland does have different influence mechanisms at its disposal to weigh on national decision-making (e.g. the North Holland lobbyist in The Hague) but these are not used in the context of SD. The interprovincial pressure organization IPO is not active on SD either. Vertical coordination mechanisms (including with regard to international decision-making) are only used for sectoral cooperation on specific issues. Vertical policy integration for SD is thus the weak link of the Dutch SD policy. Programmes such as *Learning for SD* could be used to strengthen the relations between the different levels' policies, especially as provinces become more active on SD. Some new initiatives are also interesting to bear in mind in the future, such as the development of a provincial SD benchmark by the governmental agency Senternovem.

North Rhine-Westphalia: no strategy to integrate

North Rhine-Westphalia and the other German *Länder* (states) score relatively high on self-rule. The German Constitution allocates some exclusive legislative competences to the *Länder*—e.g. in the domains of education, culture, media and natural resources—and it entrusts the residual competences to them (Hooghe et al. 2008b: 193). In Germany most

legislative responsibilities, however, are concurrent competences[9], meaning that the *Länder* can only legislate as long as the federal level has not done so. Important and powerful policy areas such as economic policy-making, environment, energy, agriculture and social welfare fall within this category (Münch 2008a: 25). In practice, legislation in those fields has most often been undertaken by the federal parliament. Schneider (2005: 131) therefore states that the political balance in Germany lies in favour of the federal government. The principle that federal law overrules the law of the *Länder* further highlights this predominance (Swenden 2006: 53). Moreover, the Länder, although they are autonomous when implementing their own laws, are also responsible for implementing federal law, which is a hallmark of so-called *cooperative federalism* (characterized by a division of labour rather than of areas of competences, as is the case in *dual federalism*) (Schneider 2005: 137; Wachendorfer-Schmidt 2000: 81). In the area of fiscal policy, powers are very divided, which lowers North Rhine-Westphalia's score on self-rule (Hooghe et al. 2008b: 215). Yet on shared rule the German *Länder* receive the maximum score in Hooghe et al.'s index. This is mostly because of the far-reaching powers of the German upper chamber, the *Bundesrat*, which represents the *Länder* and plays an important role in the formulation of federal law. Through the *Bundesrat*, the *Länder* have a tight grip on federal policy-making (Hooghe et al. 2008b: 245). Recent reforms have further increased this dynamic, sometimes in exchange for some of the *Länder*'s competences with regard to self-rule (Klaeren 2008: 3; Schneider 2005: 127).

The *Länder* thus have a relatively high degree of autonomy, but due to the system of cooperative federalism they are intricately intertwined with the federal level (Hooghe et al. 2008b: 245). This so-called *Verflechtung* has been identified as an important obstacle to flexible policy-making. The German federal system is conceived in such a way that both levels cannot operate independently from one another, with a relative concentration of legislative powers at the federal level and an extensive decentralization of implementation responsibilities towards the *Länder*. Precisely because the *Länder* are so closely involved in the implementation of federal policies, an impressive number of formal and informal coordination mechanisms have been set up (Münch 2008b: 42; Wachendorfer-Schmidt 2000: 81). These include, for instance, the intergovernmental conferences of sectoral ministers (federal and subnational). Those conferences house an array of working groups in which administrative officials try to reach a better coordination on specific policy issues (Jänicke et al. 2001: 25). The characteristics of German federalism thus put forward that a high degree of cooperation can be expected in the area of SD. They also suggest that North Rhine-Westphalia and the other Länder play an important role in the implementation of the German SD policy.

---

[9] The option where the federal government designs framework legislation and leaves specific provisions to the *Länder*, one of the traditional characteristics of German cooperative federalism, has been abolished in a recent reform of federalism (Münch 2008a: 24).

Germany, which has been labelled a pioneer in environmental policy-making, was relatively late in taking up the SD challenge (Tils 2007: 164). In 1998, the decision to adopt an SSD was included in the coalition agreement of the first red-green government headed by Schröder (Niestroy 2005: 136; OECD 2002a: 127). It wasn't until 2002, however, that the SSD saw the light. In general, it did not have very high ambitions, with the exception of some unusual goals, such as limiting the daily use of new terrain for construction to 30 hectares by 2020 (Bachus et al. 2004: 225). The SSD's goals are concrete and measurable, and come accompanied by indicators. They have been reviewed in progress reports in 2004 and in 2008. Those reports also serve as updates to the strategy itself, and as an occasion for the government to adapt the goals to its political priorities. In 2008, for instance, Merkel's government decided to no longer observe a deadline for the goal to achieve a part of 20% of organic farming, since Germany is still far from that figure and reportedly because it did not fit the political views of the coalition. On the positive side, the goal for renewable energy was tightened, as the previously set target had already been achieved long before the deadline. Yet the latest report also shows that two thirds of the goals have not been achieved, which raises the question about the strategy's impact. Previous studies have also highlighted the isolated position of the SSD, which does not interfere with other important policy processes (Niestroy 2005: 136; Tils 2007: 172). The responsibility of the SSD lies with the Chancellor's Office, which is why SD in Germany is labelled a *Chefsache*. The head of the Chancellor's Office chairs the State Secretary Committee on SD[10], a horizontal coordination body in which all ministries are represented. Every ministry also has to report on its progress on SD. The Environment Ministry assumes an important role, e.g. by taking the lead on the SD indicators and by representing the federal government in certain multilateral bodies. The German SD policy receives advice from the multistakeholder Council on SD, a generally well-respected body (Niestroy 2005: 145). Follow-up is also assured by the *Bundestag*, the parliament's lower chamber, where in 2004 a Parliamentary Advisory Committee on SD was created. This advisory committee knows no counterpart in other countries (Niestroy 2005: 136). Unlike normal parliamentary commissions, it works with unanimity to adopt stances. It will most probably also play a role in the future sustainability impact assessment, the newest instrument of the German SD governance model (Bundesregierung 2008: 33; Merkel et al. 2009: 30-31).

At the subnational level, the SD image is very diversified. Kern (2008: 125) illustrates that the SD initiatives taken by German *Länder* draw on three different concepts: Agenda 21, global governance, and so-called 'new environmental policy instruments'. In 2000, North Rhine-Westphalia was one of the *Länder* that decided to develop an Agenda 21 process. It was a demand of the Green party, that had just renewed its coalition with the Social Democrats. Agenda 21 North Rhine-Westphalia was an extensive consultation process set around a number of themes determined by the government, and in which the Environment

---

10 In Germany, state secretaries are the heads of a ministry. It is an administrative function, but often filled-in by political colour (Niestroy 2005: 138).

Ministry, held by the Greens, took the lead (Bachus et al. 2004: 234-235). The process was supported by a State Secretary Committee for SD. The government also set up a multistakeholder body, the Future Council, characterized by a unique membership that brought together personalities from the academic world, business, culture, sports, among others. Its aim was to develop a long-term vision for North Rhine-Westphalia to achieve in 2030. Most importantly, however, Agenda 21 North Rhine-Westphalia was about concrete projects and networks, with the aim to firmly embed the concept of SD within society. According to several respondents, Agenda 21 was regarded as a 'green' project, with little support from the senior coalition partner. Nevertheless, the process ended in a report containing recommendations for a North Rhine-Westphalian SSD. Yet in 2005 the red-green coalition was replaced by a black-yellow coalition led by the Christian Democrats who had been in opposition for 40 years. This change of government resulted in the complete closing-down of the Agenda 21 process and its related institutions. Some themes still play an important role within the current government, e.g. land use, but the overarching idea of SD, which was explicitly present in the Agenda 21 process, is largely left aside. The policy instruments used during the Agenda 21 period have also been changed, with a less strong emphasis on broad participation, but strong cooperation between government and other stakeholders on selected policy issues[11]. The turnover observed in North Rhine-Westphalia stands in sharp contrast to the dynamic at federal level, where the institutions for SD have been further developed by coalitions of different compositions, and where SD does not appear to be identified as 'green fiddling'.

The constitutional situation of the German federal government allows it to broach every theme or domain it wants to, even if it does not have the full legislating powers on those topics. This also happens in the area of SD (Bachus et al. 2004: 226). The SSD, for instance, includes goals on education and spatial planning, which fall almost entirely within the competences of the *Länder* and of local authorities. In consequence, the implementation and effectiveness of the German SD policy is to a large extent determined by what happens in the *Länder*. Surprisingly, however, until recently no initiatives were taken to ensure vertical policy integration. The traditional cooperative mechanisms of German federalism do not apply for SD, since it is largely confined to an unbinding strategy and does not entail concrete law-making. The Conference of Environment Ministers, which adopted SD as a guiding principle in 1997 (OECD 2002a: 130), did have a working group on SD issues since 2002, but that group did not play a role in the implementation of the SSD (Tils 2007: 168). It rather focused on exchange and information-sharing. In 2007, the working group was dissolved and replaced by a working group focusing on climate change, and in which the SD community now only plays a minor role. The federal government intentionally includes themes falling

---

[11] Examples include the *Dialog Wirtschaft und Umwelt*, in which the Environment and Economics Ministries coordinate with industry representatives, and the *Allianz für die Fläche*, that brings together the government, local authorities and a number of stakeholders, and that focuses on the reduction of land use.

outside its competences in the SSD, in order to initiate a broad-ranging process of SD. Yet the SSD does not contain concrete incentives for lower levels to act (Tils 2007: 168). As a result of the absence of such incentives and the lack of coordination mechanisms for SD, the SSD did not trigger new developments at *Länder* level (Niestroy 2005: 141). Rather, SD initiatives in the *Länder* were unrelated to the governance processes at federal level, also in North Rhine-Westphalia (Bachus et al. 2004: 233). Although both levels' policies can have similar themes and instruments (e.g. the State Secretary Committee), they are not linked. The call for vertical policy integration for SD has sounded loudly in German debates in the past years. The *Länder*, as well as other stakeholders, voiced frustration about not being implicated in the development of the federal SSD, while the federal government increasingly realized that cooperation of the *Länder* was needed to achieve the goals of the strategy. The SSD's 2008 progress report for the first time contains a chapter on the *Länder* contribution to the SSD written by the Conference of *Länder* Minister-Presidents. Following the report, the *Länder* requested closer cooperation with the federal government. At a meeting of the federal State Secretary Committee on SD, at which the *Länder* were invited, it was decided that informal working groups in which the federal government and a selection of *Länder* were represented would cooperate closely cooperation on three specific themes[12]. The output of those working groups is now being discussed in the sectoral conferences of ministers. Some respondents noted that agreement among the *Länder* on certain issues is hampered by political factors (e.g. the most recent federal elections, and the elections in some *Länder*), and that the *Länder*, although they wanted to work more closely with the federal government, are reluctant to adopt texts binding them to federal goals[13] (see also Jänicke et al. 2001: 17). North Rhine-Westphalia is no active partner in these recent mechanisms for better coordination, which appears to be due to the low priority it currently attaches to SD. Cooperation on SD with the federal government was better before 2005, but even then the federal SSD and North Rhine-Westphalian Agenda 21 were two isolated governance processes.

While the federal government supports closer cooperation with the *Länder* on the implementation of some of the issues central to its SD policy, involvement of the *Länder* in decision-making on its SD policy seems almost inexistent. In contrast to their important position in federal law-making, the *Länder* do not have any say in the federal SSD, which does not pass through the *Bundesrat* but is government-led. During the design of the SSD, the Minister-Presidents' Offices were asked for input by the Chancellor's Office, but with little response[14] (Niestroy 2005: 141). The SSD's 2004 progress report contained a chapter about

---

[12] These are public procurement, land use and SD indicators. The *Länder* involved are Baden-Württemberg, Bremen, Hesse, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Rhineland-Palatinate, Saxony and Thuringia. In the selection of the *Länder* a geographical and a political balance was pursued, as well as a balance between 'city states' and 'area states'.

[13] The *Länder* are also wary to some other forms of cooperation, such as benchmarking initiatives. They blocked a proposal made by the Council for SD to develop an inventory of their SD strategies.

[14] In that context it is important to mention that in all *Länder* SD processes are led by the Environment Ministries (Jörgensen 2002: 10).

the initiatives taken at the level of the *Länder*, but without linkages to the rest of the SSD. Input for that chapter was given by the working group on SD of the Conference of Environment Ministers (Niestroy 2005: 142). The input for the 2008 progress report, as previously mentioned, was given by the Conference of Minister-Presidents. But besides this input in some federal policy documents, the *Länder* do not play a role in decision-making for the federal SSD. According to respondents, it is not the federal government's intention to broaden the *federal* strategy to a fully *national* one (encompassing both the federal and subnational levels). Moreover, they indicate that SD policy-making already requires such an extensive coordination effort within the federal government, that further coordination with the sixteen *Länder* would be a bridge too far. In addition, it would probably scale down the strategy's ambition. And even if the *Länder* would be allowed to play a role in decision-making on the federal SD policy, they would firstly have to agree on a position among themselves, which seems hard seeing the diversity of their own SD initiatives and the political obstacles hampering their cooperation in other fields.

Vertical policy integration for SD will continue to fuel debates in the future. An interesting development is the recent cooperation between the federal government and selected *Länder* in informal working groups, a first step towards a structural instrument for vertical policy integration for SD. In general, however, it still appears to be a largely top-down process. From the perspective of the *Länder*, it is clear that they welcome the cooperation, but they are also wary as to giving up their autonomy in certain fields in favour of increased cooperation or harmonization. The case of North Rhine-Westphalia further suggests that the existence of an elaborate SD process at *Länder* level is a precondition for integration with the national level.

Flanders: integration through demarcation

In Belgium the allocation of competences is based on the principle of exclusive rather than concurrent competences. This means that each matter can only pertain to one level of government, i.e. that level has both legislating and implementing responsibilities in that matter (Reuchamps and Onclin 2009: 30). Federal laws are thus only binding for the federal government. Furthermore, no hierarchy exists between federal and subnational legislation, which places Belgium within the category of dual (rather than cooperative) federalism (Swenden 2006: 54). Flanders scores 13 on the index of self-rule. Flanders disposes of exclusive competences in many important areas such as environment, spatial planning, agriculture, economic development, foreign trade, energy policy, health policy, natural resources, transport, infrastructure, culture and education (Hooghe et al. 2008b: 185-186; Swenden et al. 2006: 865-868). While its spending powers are considerable, it does not have a large autonomy with regard to taxation (Swenden and Jans 2006: 885). Flanders also has a relatively high degree of shared rule, due to the powers the subnational entities have through

the Belgian federal legislature. According to Swenden and Jans (2006: 882), however, the Belgian upper chamber fails to defend subnational interests. Yet important to mention is the fact that in external relations, the autonomy of the Belgian subnational entities is exceptional, since they can carry out an autonomous external policy, including the conclusion of international treaties, for all issues for which they are internally competent (Massart-Piérard 2009: 174; Van den Brande 2009b: 12-13).

Flanders has a very high degree of autonomy and some other subnational entities in Europe look jealously at its extensive policy portfolio, including in external relations. The dual federal system and the principle of exclusive competences, however, does not mean that the different levels can operate independently from one another. In practice competences are extremely fragmented, and almost in every policy domain certain aspects remain federal competence. This results in a system of frequent consultations, e.g. within interministerial conferences or by means of cooperation agreements (the negotiations of which resemble the conclusion of international treaties) (Reuchamps and Onclin 2009: 32-33). In addition, the fact that many competences pertaining to the subnational entities are to a large extent 'Europeanized' makes that the subnational entities are obliged to work together with the federal government on those issues (Swenden and Jans 2006: 886). A relatively important coordination effort between the two levels can thus be expected for SD.

At the level of the federal government, the first initiatives on SD were triggered by the Rio Summit. Belgium is said to be a frontrunner, due to the early creation of a National (later renamed Federal) Council for SD and the adoption of the federal SD act in 1997 (Rombouts 2003: 36). This act originates a complex institutional framework which obliges the government to adopt four-yearly SD plans and two-yearly SD reports. The reports are drawn up by the Federal Planning Bureau, while the responsibility for the plans lies with the Interdepartmental Commission on SD. This horizontal coordination body comprises representatives of the different federal departments and of ministerial cabinets, as well as representatives from the subnational governments, although theoretically the latter are only observers. In 2002 a separate SD administration was established, the Federal Public Planning Service SD, to oversee the preparation and implementation of the federal SD policy. Horizontal integration is also pursued by means of SD units in each federal department (Mazijn and Gouzée 2007: 6). The newest instrument of the federal SD policy is the Sustainability Impact Assessment, the impact of which is, however, still unclear (Lambrecht 2007: 7-11). Important to mention as well is the inclusion of SD in the Belgian constitution, stating that SD is a general policy goal of all governments, federal and subnational. In the federal government, political responsibility for SD has shifted with each change of government. Although the institutional cycle of plans and reports remains unaffected, interviews point out that those shifts have had a large impact on the political dynamic regarding SD, especially depending on the specific combination of competences of the

minister or state secretary in question[15]. Although the institutional framework on SD is well developed, the federal SD policy is criticized for its lack of implementation. Observers also denounce the lack of linkages between the plans and reports, and the 'shopping list' character of the plans. The plans, which derive their objectives from international SD policy[16], have quantified objectives, but are not linked to important budget lines. The federal SD policy is also criticized for lacking a long-term vision (Niestroy 2005: 80-96). That might change with a proposed modification of the federal SD act, which calls for the development of a federal long-term vision on SD.

While the federal SD policy was influenced by the Rio Summit, SD at the Flemish level was largely triggered by the Johannesburg Summit, at which a Flemish delegation participated. After Johannesburg, a few civil servants established an informal working group on SD within the Flemish administration, partly to coordinate international SD activities[17]. The Flemish SD policy was institutionalized in 2004 when, as part of a reorganization of the Flemish administration, SD—as well as some other horizontal policy issues—became the responsibility of the Minister-President. A small SD coordination unit was established within the Minister-President's administration, and the interdepartmental working group on SD was formalized. The Flemish governance model for SD proclaims minimal coordination (Spillemaeckers and Bachus 2009: 7), meaning that the individual ministers are in charge of integrating SD within their policy areas, and that the SD coordination unit only provides the needed capacity-building and some coordination through the interdepartmental working group. In 2006 the Minister-President issued the first phase of the Flemish SSD, which is mainly a framework text laying out strategic objectives (structured around the thematic issues of the EU SD Strategy), and displaying the institutional steps taken to anchor SD. The second phase of the SSD is constituted of a series of twelve operational projects, which have only recently been approved. Those projects are also connected to a certain amount of subsidies to be allocated by the SD coordination unit (Vlaamse overheid 2009). The Flemish SD policy has a legal basis. A decree passed in 2008 obliges each Flemish government to adopt a new SSD within the first ten months of its swearing-in. Participation of stakeholders happens through the acknowledged advisory councils, who regularly advise the government on parts of its SD policy. In comparison to the other subnational governments in Belgium, Flanders has a relatively well-developed institutional framework for SD. Yet the Flemish SSD is rather weak

---

[15] That combination changes regularly and has consequences for the political weight and the amount of resources available for SD. At the moment, SD is the responsibility of minister Magnette, competent for a broad range of issues such as climate, energy, environment and consumer affairs. Between 2004 and 2007, state secretary Van Weert had only SD and social economy in her portfolio. (In Belgium, a state secretary is a 'junior minister' who belongs to the government, but is accountable to a specific minister or to the prime minister.)

[16] The first plan (2000-2004) is influenced by the goals of Agenda 21, the second plan (2004-2008) is structured according to the thematic challenges of the EU SD Strategy (Niestroy 2005: 86, 96).

[17] In the margins of the Johannesburg Summit, Flanders co-founded nrg4SD, a network of subnational governments aimed at information-sharing and at strengthening the role of subnational governments in global decision-making for SD. Especially during the first years of nrg4SD's existence, Flanders was an active member of the network (Happaerts et al. 2010).

and its goals are noncommittal. Although the government has issued two reports with indicators on SD, those are not related to an evaluation of the SSD. Furthermore, the SD policy does not seem to have a substantial impact to important policy processes, such as the long-term development plan *Flanders In Action*[18].

As a consequence of the dual character of Belgian federalism, the subnational governments are not involved in the implementation of the federal SD policy. The federal and Flemish strategies exclusively take place within the limits of each level's competences. Respondents point out that drawing up a federal SD plan is therefore a delicate matter, because of the limited federal competences. The plans traditionally have a relatively small environmental dimension but a strong social emphasis (Niestroy 2005: 96), since environment is mostly a subnational responsibility. Federal policy is in no way binding to the subnational level, which may have contributed to the fact that Flanders has been little inspired by the federal governance model for SD when it designed its own model (although the reluctance of the Belgian subnational governments to accept a federal 'frame' also plays a role here). The federal and Flemish strategies are thus characterized by different themes and instruments, with the largest degree of freedom at the Flemish level. Both, however, are strongly impacted by global and European governance processes. References to international commitments are commonplace in Belgian politics, because it is easier to agree on external requirements than to rely on intra-Belgian negotiations (see also Niestroy 2005: 97).

Several structural instruments allow Flanders to influence decision-making on the federal SD policy, most importantly membership in an SD Council (the Federal Council for SD) and involvement in an interdepartmental SD committee (the Interdepartmental Commission on SD). Flanders proactively uses those mechanisms, not only to provide genuine input for the federal SD plans, but also to guard against federal trespassing on subnational competences. Out of all the subnational governments Flanders is by far the most active participant in national coordination mechanisms for SD. Respondents explain this through the absence of a comparably well-developed SD policy in other entities, but Flanders was already an active partner before the institutionalization of its SD policy. The personal commitment of some civil servants and a Flemish policy of attendance appear important determining factors. In 2005, the federal State Secretary for SD took the initiative of inviting the subnational governments to negotiate a national SSD (encompassing all governments), inspired by international commitments. The negotiations took place within an Interministerial Commission on SD, established for the occasion. The idea was to offer an added value to the initiatives taken at the different levels, although some rather thought of a national strategy as a mere sum of the existing strategies. The subnational negotiators were indeed reluctant to advance. Flanders especially did not want to agree on any national strategy before finalizing its own. It rather preferred a future national strategy, if ever there would be one, to be adapted

---

[18] The project does make some references to SD, but those are not linked to the Flemish SSD nor to the institutions governing the Flemish SD policy.

to the Flemish approach. The negotiations ended in a framework text proclaiming good intentions. Afterwards, however, no new initiatives were taken to restart the process and the interministerial commission was dissolved. At Flemish request, the framework text does mention the possibility of concluding cooperation agreements for SD (IMCDO 2005: §19). Such an agreement could concern, for instance, the Belgian representation in multilateral bodies for SD, such as the EU, the UN and the OECD. Flanders is a very active member in the Belgian delegations to these bodies (see, e.g., Van den Brande 2009a).

Niestroy (2005: 77) states that Belgium's complex institutional construction leads to an emphasis on cooperation on procedures rather than on substance. When looking specifically at the allocation of competences and the degree of autonomy of the subnational governments, one needs to conclude that a very large share of the policy areas that are key to SD, such as energy, environment, economy and education, pertain to the powers of the subnational governments. Much therefore depends on the willingness of these subnational governments, including the advance towards greater vertical policy integration. An important development in that context will be whether Flanders and its peers decide to cooperate with the federal government on the future vision on SD foreseen in the modification of the federal SD act, in order to make it a truly national long-term vision for SD in Belgium.

Quebec: governing in solitude

With a maximum score on self-rule the Canadian provinces have the highest autonomy within their own jurisdictions of all subnational governments worldwide. Canada is therefore labelled as one of the most decentralized federations (Bakvis and Skogstad 2002: 4; Simeon and Papillon 2006: 92; Tomblin 2000: 146). Canadian provinces have wide-ranging competences in areas such as agriculture, environment, energy, education and immigration, and they have exclusive ownership over public lands and natural resources (Hooghe et al. 2008b: 188; Poirier 2009: 111-112; Simeon and Papillon 2006: 103-114). Canada also has a very decentralized fiscal system, with many taxing powers reserved for the provinces (Hooghe et al. 2008b: 213; Simeon and Papillon 2006: 103). In some areas, Quebec has even more competences than the other provinces and territories, since it has acquired opt-outs for issues it deems central to its identity and nation-building. This is for instance the case in education, health and immigration (Hooghe et al. 2008b: 188). In most cases, however, the distribution of competences in Canada is unclear. This is due to the fact that the Constitution, written in 1867, does not provide clarity, and many times courts must decide in allocating competences (Poirier 2009: 108-110). Environment is such an area where the division of competences is not well-defined (Hoberg and Harrison 1994: 124). Especially for new policy areas this lack of clarity can be a problem (Simeon and Papillon 2006: 102). As a consequence, many issues are characterized by incoherent and sometimes contradictory policies (Skogstad 2000: 72; Tomblin 2000: 146). Also for matters important to SD such

incoherence has been observed (OECD 2002a: 44). Both levels of government have such a wide range of responsibilities and instruments that they can design and conduct policies in nearly every domain they want (Simeon and Papillon 2006: 115). When it comes to shared rule, the situation is somewhat different. Mainly due to the fact that the provinces have no say in federal policy-making through the parliament, their degree of shared rule is relatively low (Bakvis and Skogstad 2002: 5; Hooghe et al. 2008b: 241). Also in the international arena the Canadian provinces have only limited access, in spite of their large share of competences and the wide-ranging external relations of some provinces such as Quebec.

It is clear that Quebec has an extremely high degree of autonomy, especially with regard to self-rule. However, the absence of provincial influence in federal law-making, the hazy distribution of competences and the consequent interdependence between the two levels of governance have resulted in an extensive system of formal and informal intergovernmental relations, such as sectoral councils of federal and provincial ministers. Moreover, a large number of intergovernmental agreements have been signed, although Quebec has not always joined them[19] (Bakvis and Skogstad 2002: 4; Fournier 2009: 49-50; Poirier 2009: 116-117). The federal dynamic in Canada is often characterized by a bipolar relationship of Quebec versus the rest of Canada (Fournier 2009: 50). I thus expect vertical policy integration in the case of Quebec to be difficult rather than evident.

Stirred by the activities of the Brundtland Report and the upcoming Rio Summit, the Canadian Conservative government issued the *Green Plan* in 1990, to be presented in Rio as its SSD (Tarasofsky 2007: 4). Yet the *Green Plan* was mainly an environmental action plan, committed to additional spending on the environment (Hoberg and Harrison 1994; OECD 2002a: 46). After Rio, the Conservative Environment Minister Charest launched his *Projet de Société*, a multistakeholder partnership intended to transform the former *Green Plan* into a full-blown SSD, in keeping with the Rio commitments. The process, however, failed after the disappearance of political momentum and because of organizational difficulties (Tarasofsky 2007: 6; Toner 2000: 61-62). The subsequent Liberal government institutionalized SD through the conception of its *Guide to Green Government* (Toner 2000: 64). This document, along with an amendment to the Auditor General Act, prescribes that each of the thirty or so departments develop 3-yearly SD strategies explaining the activities they undertake to promote SD. The process is led by the Environment Ministry, which has until now overseen four rounds of departmental SD strategies. At the same time, the post of Commissioner of the Environment and SD was created within the office of the Auditor General of Canada, an independent position accountable only to parliament. The Commissioner's task is to audit the implementation of the federal environment and SD policies. The Canadian approach to SD, which is decentralized and strongly environmentally focused, is criticized for not introducing new policy measures. The departmental SD strategies have the tendency to be catalogues of

---

[19] An often cited example is the *Canada-Wide Accord on Environmental Harmonization*, that has not been endorsed by Quebec because it did not assign enough responsibilities to the provinces (Toner 2000: 82-83).

existing actions, and they are not linked to a budget (see also Toner 2000: 65). Furthermore, the strategies are not ratified by the government and many of them are said to be made by junior-level officials. The impact of the Commissioner's reports is reportedly low (Tarasofsky 2007: 8). With a strong environmental interpretation, the social dimension of SD is marginal in the Canadian SD policy (Bachus et al. 2004: 207). Another observed weakness is the lack of an overarching federal SSD guiding the departmental strategies. Yet that is due to change, after the adoption in 2008 of the Federal SD Act. The Act calls for the development of a federal SSD containing objectives to which the departmental strategies have to adhere. Interviews announce that the first SSD, which is being drafted by the Environment Ministry, will again have a mainly environmental focus.

Even if Canada was perceived as an early SD champion because of its activeness in the run-up to the Brundtland Report and the Rio Summit (Tarasofsky 2007: 48), the Liberal government of Quebec was at least equally early in putting SD on its agenda. In 1988 it was the first Canadian government to create a Round Table on Environment and Economy[20] (Bachus et al. 2004: 217). Three years later, it established an interdepartmental committee on SD (*Comité interministériel de développement durable*), a horizontal coordination body which represent all departments at director-general level, still active today. The debate on SD simmered on under the subsequent governments led by the sovereignist Parti Québécois, during which time many reports on SD were made and presented at global meetings. Yet no concrete SD strategy or plan was produced. That idea gained momentum when the Liberals, led by former federal Conservative Environment Minister Charest, came back into power in 2003. After the example of his experiences in the federal government, Charest instructed his Environment Minister to develop a 'green plan'. At the recommendation of the public and civil society, the Environment Ministry turned it into an SD plan, which was presented for public consultation together with an ambitious SD Act. The Act, passed in 2006, intends to promote SD in Quebec by firmly embedding it into public administration. The act calls for an SSD and for the development of SD action plans by each department and public organism, around 150 in total. Furthermore, the Act creates the position of an SD Commissioner within the office of the Auditor General of Quebec. The Commissioner has to audit the government with regard to SD and report to parliament on the implementation of the SD Act, including on the compliance of the SD principles. One of the ambitious components of the Act, indeed, is the definition of no less than sixteen principles which need to guide the integration of SD into public administration. The Act also adds the right to a healthful environment and one in which biodiversity is preserved to Quebec's Charter of human rights and freedoms. The SSD and the action plans have now been made public, and the government is currently developing its SD indicators (see Gendron et al. 2009). The SSD covers a large thematic scope, focusing not only on environmental and economic issues, but also referring to social, political and cultural

---

[20] In 1987, the Canadian Council of Resource and Environment Ministers recommended the establishment of such round tables in order to institutionalize multistakeholder participation for SD (Toner 2000: 58).

matters. Although Quebec's approach is applauded for its ambitions and for its strong legal foundation, observers and respondents denounce the weakness of the SSD and the action plans, and the fact that they do not transcend the governmental realm. The SSD contains a large number of objectives, which are not measurable, time-bound or linked to a budget[21]. Furthermore, critics fear that the Environment Ministry[22] does not have the necessary clout to compel other departments to comply with the SSD (Gendron 2005: 25). Although it has established an SD coordination bureau, mandated to oversee the development of the action plans and to develop capacity-building instruments, the Environment Ministry's role given by the SD Act largely exceeds its capacities. However, the institutionalization of SD in Quebec is an ongoing process and too recent to be fully judged. In the near future it will be interesting to see how the SD indicators develop, what the impact of the SD Commissioner is, and how the government decides to concretely deal with the SD principles.

In a reference to a famous novel, Pelletier (2009: 79) writes that the two major communities in Canada—the English-speakers living mainly outside Quebec and the French-speakers that live primarily in Quebec—coexist side by side in "two solitudes". The same thing could be said about the federal and Quebec SD policies, that take place within the scope of their respective competences, with no linkages existing between the two. In both governments, SD policy is largely conceived as making governmental actions more sustainable, with until now little impact outside the governmental realm. Cooperation between federal and provincial governments is still very sectoral. The Canadian Council of Ministers for the Environment, for instance, does not discuss SD as such, but focuses only on specific topics such as water, air or waste (and recently climate change). Because of the characteristics of Canadian federalism, the federal SD policy has no impact on Quebec. It is striking, however, that the Quebec approach to SD resembles the federal policy in many ways, e.g. the Commissioner or the departmental plans. Part of the explanation is, of course, that Quebec's Prime Minister is a former federal Environment Minister. Yet Quebec's approach also seems to have learned from the weaknesses of the federal model, e.g. by developing a government-wide strategy before demanding departmental action plans. It is more ambitious, because of the firm legal basis with an emphasis on the integration of SD principles, and because of the fact that it exceeds the governmental departments and covers near to 150 public organisms. The Quebec model is also a lot less limited to the environmental dimension, and this is where its degree of autonomy comes in. Quebec's policy scope is simply so wide that a spectrum of areas can be covered by its SD policy. Whereas the limited competences of the federal level might partly explain why its policy is focused on the environment, an area where competences are not always clearly divided.

---

[21] Some economic instruments, however, have been put in place. The SD Act created a *Green Fund* to finance environmental measures to promote SD. Earlier, the sovereignist government in 2000 established the Quebec Action Fund for SD (*Fonds d'action québécois pour le développement durable*), which evolved into an association without lucrative purpose that funds projects aimed at promoting behavioural change for SD.
[22] Interestingly, the ministry was renamed Ministry of SD, Environment and Parks in 2005.

Both levels govern in 'solitude' also because the provinces have no access at all to decision-making on the federal SD policy. Their level of shared rule points out that their power in Ottawa is minimal, and respondents confirm that this is true in the area of SD as well. Quebec has not undertaken any attempts to do so either. Yet the Quebec governments, both sovereignist and Liberal, are very much interested in participating in multilateral decision-making for SD, e.g. in the UNCSD. But seeing its limited degree of shared rule, access is not automatic. Besides seeking involvement in Canadian delegations, Quebec therefore also tries to gain access through routes that bypass the national level, e.g. by cooperating with NGOs such as The Climate Group.

Vertical policy integration for sustainable development: comparative perspectives

In the four cases examined, different mechanisms for vertical policy integration for SD can be discerned. In the case of North Holland, a link—albeit a relatively weak one—exists between the national SD policy and provincial SD initiatives. Using Radin's classification, the link is made up by a programmatic and capacity-building instrument. In the cases of North Rhine-Westphalia and Flanders, structural instruments are used for vertical policy integration, i.e. involvement in an SD council and in interministerial committees, although the latter has only been exceptional for North Rhine-Westphalia. Moreover, a recent initiative in Germany concerns institutionalized mechanisms for better coordination, but that mechanism is not used by North Rhine-Westphalia. In Quebec's case, no mechanisms for vertical policy integration for SD were found.

Looking at this paper's first research question, it was expected that the cases with a lower degree of self-rule would play a large role in the implementation of national SD policies. In the Netherlands and Germany, that is usually the case in traditional policy areas. For SD, however, the picture is quite different. The Dutch provinces have no part to play whatsoever in the national SD policy. In Germany only recently initiatives have been initiated to start working with *Länder*, but North Rhine-Westphalia did not get involved. As for the subnational governments with the highest degree of self-rule, in my analysis Flanders and Quebec, I expected rather isolated SD policies, seeing the dual character of Belgian and Canadian federalism, but with attempts of coordination. Coordination does happen in the case of Flanders, but not in the case of Quebec. In general, it appears that in many cases, governance for SD at the national level is conceived as a purely governmental policy, formulated and implemented by national governments, with little effects for the subnational level. As a consequence, the subnational governments turn upon themselves, and conduct an SD policy that is enacted within the borders of their competences, in line with their political priorities and without clear linkages with the national level. While Lafferty and Meadowcroft said that SD had been invoked to justify shifts of responsibilities between different levels of

government (cf supra), it is clear that competences do not follow from SD, SD follows from competences. Each government attempts to conduct an SD policy within the framework of its own autonomy. Even subnational governments with a low degree of self-rule can do so. In the analysis it rather appeared that most difficulties are experienced at the national level, e.g. in Belgium and Canada, where the high degree of self-rule of the subnational entities restricts the freedom of movement of national governments. Degree of self-rule is thus an important factor determining the SD policies of subnational governments and it has an impact on the freedom of movement of national governments. However, only to a limited degree does it determine the efforts undertaken in a country to achieve greater vertical policy integration, or the strategies of subnational governments to deal with it.

As for my second research question, all subnational governments appear to have very limited authority to shape national decision-making for SD. Only in the case of Flanders, possibilities exist to influence decision-making for national (and international) SD policy, and those possibilities are abundantly used. That contrasts with North Rhine-Westphalia, that is not involved in the recent effort for better coordination on SD. But in most cases, it is said that intra-governmental cooperation for SD is already such a hard task, that additional coordination with subnational governments would be practically impossible. The fact that the Netherlands, Germany and Canada each have to count with twelve or more subnational entities could play a role here, whereas Belgium has only five, the governments of which are all located relatively close to Brussels. The degree of shared rule of subnational governments seems less relevant in governance for SD, since it is largely based upon the authority of subnational governments in national legislation, and SD policies are mostly conducted outside of national parliaments. In the cases investigated in this paper, no causal link could be drawn with the degree of shared rule of a subnational government and the amount of influence it can exert on national decision-making for SD.

Conclusion

The analysis of vertical policy integration seen from the perspective of four subnational governments paints a grim picture. The general goal of vertical policy integration, reaching better policy coherence between different levels of government, is not met. This conclusion is in line with previous analyses of governance for SD at the national level. Weak vertical policy integration for SD can to a certain extent be explained by the fact that in all countries, both federal and unitary, competences are shared between national and subnational governments. The normative discourse of international policy documents (e.g. the need for coherent action at all levels of governance) clashes with the reality within countries, where responsibilities are divided and one level of government's freedom of movement is restricted by the other. The degree of self-rule of subnational governments is most relevant in this dynamic, while shared rule appears less determining in governance for SD.

Yet the degree of autonomy of subnational governments and the allocation of competences within a country are not the only factors accounting for a weak vertical policy integration. Other factors have to be taken in consideration too. In my analysis, political factors seem very determining in how SD is conceived within different governments, how it is translated into governance mechanisms, and how governments manage the coordination challenge with other levels of government. Further research should therefore take into account the political weight attached to SD, and the influence of political factors both on the SD policies itself, as well as on vertical policy integration for SD. Further research could also focus on the influence of international governance processes on SD initiatives at the subnational level, since this paper suggests that such influence differs from case to case.

This paper approached a previously examined problem from a new angle, i.e. from the perspective of subnational governments. It has shown that not only national governments should be blamed when vertical policy integration for SD is insufficient. The strategies and political priorities of subnational governments are at least equally important. It is true that national governments have the main responsibility for initiating cooperation with subnational governments. But to make that cooperation successful is a shared responsibility.

References

Bachus, Kris, Hans Bruyninckx, and Mayke Poesen-Vandeputte. 2004. Vlaams structureel overleg voor duurzame ontwikkeling (Eindrapport in het kader van het TWOL-onderzoeksproject 'Vlaams structureel overleg voor duurzame ontwikkeling'). Leuven: Katholieke Universiteit Leuven & Hoger instituut voor de arbeid.

Baker, Susan, and Katarina Eckerberg. 2008. Introduction. In pursuit of sustainable development at the sub-national level: the 'new' governance agenda. In *In Pursuit of Sustainable Development. New governance practices at the sub-national level in Europe*, edited by S. Baker and K. Eckerberg. London & New York: Routledge.

Baker, Susan, Maria Kousis, Dick Richardson, and Stephen Young. 1997. Introduction. The theory and practice of sustainable development in EU perspective. In *The politics of sustainable development. Theory, policy and practice within the European Union*, edited by S. Baker, M. Kousis, D. Richardson and S. Young. London & New York: Routledge.

Bakvis, Herman, and Grace Skogstad. 2002. Canadian Federalism: Performance, Effectiveness, and Legitimacy. In *Canadian Federalism. Performance, Effectiveness, and Legitimacy*, edited by H. Bakvis and G. Skogstad. Ontario: Oxford University Press.

Berger, Gerald. 2003. Reflections on Governance: Power Relations and Policy Making in Regional Sustainable Development. *Journal of Environmental Policy & Planning* 5 (3): 219-234.

Berger, Gerald, and Michal Sedlacko. 2009. Involvement of sub-national authorities in National Sustainable Development Strategy processes (ESDN Quarterly Report March 2009). Vienna: European Sustainable Development Network.

Berger, Gerald, and Reinhard Steurer. 2008. National sustainable development strategies in EU member states. The regional dimension. In *In Pursuit of Sustainable Development. New governance practices at the sub-national level in Europe*, edited by S. Baker and K. Eckerberg. London & New York: Routledge.

Bomberg, Elizabeth. 2004. Regions, Multi-level Governance and Sustainable Development: Reflections and Strategies. Paper read at REGIONET Workshop 4: "Regional Sustainable Development - Cross Fertilisation and Integration of Results of REGIONET", 14-16 January, at Brussels.

Bornemann, Basil. 2008. Policy Integration for Sustainable Development: What does it mean and how can we analyse it? Paper read at the 2008 Berlin Conference on the Human Dimensions of Global Environmental Change, 22-23 February, at Berlin.

Brans, Marleen, and Rudolf Maes. 2001. The Low Countries between Divergence and Convergence. In *Polder Politics. The re-invention of consensus democracy in the Netherlands*, edited by F. Hendriks and T. A. J. Toonen. Aldershot - Burlington - Singapore - Sydney: Ashgate.

Brown, Katrina. 2009. Human development and environmental governance: a reality check. In *Governing Sustainability*, edited by W. N. Adger and A. Jordan. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Brugmann, Jeb. 1996. Planning for Sustainability at the Local Government Level. *Environmental Impact Assessment Review* 16: 363-379.

Bruyninckx, Hans. 2006. Sustainable development: the institutionalization of a contested policy concept. In *Palgrave advances in international environmental politics*, edited by M. M. Betsill, K. Hochstetler and D. Stevis. Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan.

Bundesregierung. 2008. Forschrittsbericht 2008 zur nationalen Nachhaltigkeitsstrategie. Für ein nachhaltiges Deutschland. Berlin: Presse- und Informationsamt der Bundesregierung.

Coenen, Frans. 2008. New interpretations of local governance for sustainable development in the Netherlands. In *In Pursuit of Sustainable Development. New governance practices at the sub-national level in Europe*, edited by S. Baker and K. Eckerberg. London & New York: Routledge.

Dalal-Clayton, Barry, and Fieke Krikhaar, eds. 2007. *A New Sustainable Development Strategy: An Opportunity Not To Be Missed*. Den Haag: RMNO.

Dieperink, Carel, and Peter Driessen. 2007. Gelaagde beleidsvoering. In *Milieubeleid. Analyse en perspectief*, edited by P. Driessen and P. Leroy. Bussum: Uitgeverij Coutinho.

Driessen, P. P. J. 2000. Provincies als regionaal regisseur. In *Milieu, samenleving en beleid*, edited by P. P. J. Driessen and P. Glasbergen. Den Haag: Elsevier.

Dryzek, John S. 2005. *The Politics of the Earth. Environmental Discourses*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Fournier, Bernard. 2009. La fédération canadienne. In *Le fédéralisme en Belgique et au Canada. Comparaison sociopolitique*, edited by B. Fournier and M. Reuchamps. Bruxelles: De Boeck.

Gendron, Corinne. 2005. Le Québec à l'ère du développement durable. *Options politiques / Policy Options* Jul-Aug 2005: 20-25.

Gendron, Corinne, Richard Janda, Marie-Andrée Caron, Olga Navarro-Flores, Annie Rochette, Véronique Bisaillon, Philip Duguay, Sarah Gagnon-Turcotte, Chantal Hervieux, and Emilie White. 2009. Comprendre, évaluer, informer et décider : des indicateurs de développement durable pour le Québec (Mémoire de la Chaire de responsabilité sociale et de développement durable et du Centre de droit international du développement durable déposé à la Commission des transports et de l'environnement de l'Assemblée nationale du Québec). Montréal: Chaire de responsabilité sociale et de développement durable & Centre de droit international du développement durable.

Happaerts, Sander, Karoline Van den Brande, and Hans Bruyninckx. 2010 (forthcoming). Governance for Sustainable Development at the Inter-subnational Level: the Case of the Network of Regional Governments for Sustainable Development (nrg4SD). *Regional and Federal Studies* 20 (1).

Hendriks, Frank. 2001. The Netherlands: Reinventing Tradition in Local and Regional Democracy. In *Subnational Democracy in the European Union. Challenges and Opportunities*, edited by J. Loughlin. New York: Oxford University Press.

Hoberg, George, and Kathryn Harrison. 1994. It's Not Easy Being Green: The Politics of Canada's Green Plan. *Canadian Public Policy - Analyse de Politiques* XX (2): 119-137.

Hooghe, Liesbet, Gary Marks, and Arjan H. Schakel. 2008a. Special Issue: Regional Authority in 42 Countries, 1950-2006: A Measure and Five Hypotheses. *Regional and Federal Studies* 18 (2-3).

Hooghe, Liesbet, Arjan H. Schakel, and Gary Marks. 2008b. Appendix A: Profiles of Regional Reform in 42 Countries (1950-2006). *Regional and Federal Studies* 18 (2-3): 183-258.

Hulst, Rudie. 2005. Regional Governance in Unitary States: Lessons from the Netherlands in Comparative Perspective. *Local Government Studies* 31 (1): 99-120.

Interministeriële Conferentie voor Duurzame Ontwikkeling ad hoc (IMCDO). 2005. *Kadertekst nationale strategie duurzame ontwikkeling*. PODDO [cited 3 December 2007]. Available from www.poddo.be/NL/thema_s_/nationale_strategie.

International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN). 1980. World Conservation Strategy. Living Resource Conservation for Sustainable Development. Gland: IUCN.

Jänicke, Martin, and Helge Jörgens. 1998. National Environmental Policy Planning in OECD Countries: Preliminary Lessons from Cross-National Comparisons. *Environmental Politics* 7 (2): 27-54.

Jänicke, Martin, Helge Jörgens, Kirsten Jörgensen, and Ralf Nordbeck. 2001. Governance for Sustainable Development in Germany: Institutions and Policy Making. OECD.

Jörgensen, Kirsten. 2002. Policymaking for Ecological Sustainability in Federal States: The Examples of the German *Bundesländer* and the U.S. States (AICGS/DAAD working paper). Washington: American Institute for Contemporary German Studies.

———. 2004. The role of governments (national, regional, local). In *Institutions for sustainable development*, edited by Consell Assessor per al Desenvolupament Sostenible. Barcelona: CADS, Generalitat de Catalunya.

———. 2007. Sub-national trans-Atlantic lesson-drawing related to governance for sustainable development. In *Environmental Governance in Global Perspective. New Approaches to Ecological and Political Modernisation*, edited by M. Jänicke and K. Jacob. Berlin: Freie Universität Berlin, Department of Political and Social Sciences.

Keating, Michael, and Nicola McEwen. 2005. Introduction: Devolution and Public Policy in Comparative Perspective. *Regional and Federal Studies* 15 (4): 413-421.

Kern, Kristine. 2008. Sub-national sustainable development initiatives in federal states in Germany. In *In Pursuit of Sustainable Development. New governance practices at the sub-national level in Europe*, edited by S. Baker and K. Eckerberg. London & New York: Routledge.

Klaeren, Jutta. 2008. Editorial. *Informationen zur politischen Bildung* 298: 3.

Lafferty, William M. 2001. Introduction. In *Sustainable Communities in Europe*, edited by W. M. Lafferty. London: Earthscan.

Lafferty, William M., and Eivind Hovden. 2003. Environmental Policy Integration: Towards an Analytical Framework. *Environmental Politics* 12 (3): 1-22.

Lafferty, William M., and James Meadowcroft. 2000a. Concluding Perspectives. In *Implementing Sustainable Development. Strategies and Initiatives in High Consumption Societies*, edited by W. M. Lafferty and J. Meadowcroft. New York: Oxford University Press.

———. 2000b. Patterns of Governmental Engagement. In *Implementing Sustainable Development. Strategies and Initiatives in High Consumption Societies*, edited by W. M. Lafferty and J. Meadowcroft. New York: Oxford University Press.

Lambrecht, Jesse. 2007. Stand van zaken m.b.t. duurzaamheidsbeoordeling (working paper). Leuven: Steunpunt Duurzame Ontwikkeling.

Lundqvist, Lennart J. 2004. Management by objectives and results: a comparison of Dutch, Swedish and EU strategies for realising sustainable development. In *Governance for Sustainable Development. The Challenge of Adapting Form to Function*, edited by W. M. Lafferty. Cheltenham & Northampton: Edward Elgar.

Marks, Gary, Liesbet Hooghe, and Arjan H. Schakel. 2008. Measuring Regional Authority. *Regional and Federal Studies* 18 (2-3): 111-121.

Massart-Piérard, Françoise. 2009. Les entités fédérées belges : des relations internationales peu "paradiplomatiques". In *Le fédéralisme en Belgique et au Canada. Comparaison sociopolitique*, edited by B. Fournier and M. Reuchamps. Bruxelles: De Boeck.

Mazijn, Bernard, and Nadine Gouzée. 2007. Making Sustainable Development Reality. 10 years of Belgian Federal Sustainable Development Strategy. Brussels: Federal Public Planning Service Sustainable Development.

McEwen, Nicola. 2005. The Territorial Politics of Social Policy Development in Multi-level States. *Regional and Federal Studies* 15 (4): 537-554.

Meadowcroft, James. 2007. National Sustainable Development Strategies: Features, Challenges and Reflexivity. *European Environment* 17: 152-163.

———. 2008. Who is in Charge here? Governance for Sustainable Development in a Complex World. In *Governance for Sustainable Development. Coping with ambivalence, uncertainty and distributed power*, edited by J. Newig, J.-P. Voß and J. Monstadt. London & New York: Routledge.

Meekison, J. Peter, ed. 2002. *Intergovernmental Relations in Federal Countries. A Series of Essays on the Practice of Federal Governance*. Ottawa: Forum of Federations.

Merkel, Angela, Horst Seehofer, Guido Westerwelle, Volker Kauder, Peter Ramsauer, and Birgit Homburger. 2009. Wachstum. Bildung. Zusammenhalt. Der Koalitionsvertrag zwischen CDU, CSU und FDP. 17. Legislaturperiode. Berlin: CDU Deutschlands.

Ministerie van Volkshuisvesting, Ruimtelijke Ordening en Milieubeheer (VROM). 2002. Nationale Strategie voor Duurzame Ontwikkeling. Verkenning van het rijksoverheidsbeleid. Den Haag: Ministerie van VROM.

Münch, Ursula. 2008a. Bundesstaatliche Verfassungsprinzipien seit 1949. *Informationen zur politischen Bildung* 298: 19-29.

———. 2008b. Politikverflechtung im kooperativen Föderalismus. *Informationen zur politischen Bildung* 298: 42-47.

Niestroy, Ingeborg. 2005. *Sustaining Sustainability. A benchmark study on national strategies towards sustainable development and the impact of councils in nine EU member states*, EEAC series, Background study no. 2. Utrecht: Lemma.

OECD. 2001a. *Policies to Enhance Sustainable Development*. Paris: OECD Publications.

———. 2001b. *The DAC Guidelines. Strategies for Sustainable Development: Guidance for Development Co-operation*. Paris: OECD Publications.

———. 2002a. *Governance for Sustainable Development. Five OECD Case Studies*. Paris: OECD Publications.

———. 2002b. Improving Policy Coherence and Integration for Sustainable Development. A checklist (Policy Brief). OECD Observer.

Paredis, Erik. 2008. Transition management in Flanders. Policy context, first results and surfacing tensions (working paper). Leuven: Steunpunt Duurzame Ontwikkeling.

Pelletier, Réjean. 2009. La dynamique fédérale au Canada. In *Le fédéralisme en Belgique et au Canada. Comparaison sociopolitique*, edited by B. Fournier and M. Reuchamps. Bruxelles: De Boeck.

Peters, B. Guy, and Jon Pierre. 2001. Special issue: Intergovernmental relations and multi-level governance. *Policy & Politics* 29 (2).

Poirier, Johanne. 2009. Le partage des compétences et les relations intergouvernementales: la situation au Canada. In *Le fédéralisme en Belgique et au Canada. Comparaison sociopolitique*, edited by B. Fournier and M. Reuchamps. Bruxelles: De Boeck.

Radin, Beryl A. 2003. The Instruments of Intergovernmental Management. In *Handbook of Public Administration*, edited by B. G. Peters and J. Pierre. London, Thousand Oaks & New Delhi: SAGE Publications.

Research Institute for Managing Sustainability (RIMAS). 2009. Contributions of the Regional and Local Authorities to Sustainable Development Strategies. Brussels: European Union Committee of the Regions.

Reuchamps, Min, and François Onclin. 2009. La fédération belge. In *Le fédéralisme en Belgique et au Canada. Comparaison sociopolitique*, edited by B. Fournier and M. Reuchamps. Bruxelles: De Boeck.

Rombouts, Theo. 2003. Duurzame ontwikkeling: een wereldwijde uitdaging. In *Het draagvlak voor duurzame ontwikkeling. Wat het is en zou kunnen zijn*, edited by P. Develtere. Antwerpen: De Boeck.

Rose, Richard. 1991. *What Is Lesson-drawing?* Glasgow: Centre for the Study of Public Policy, University of Strathclyde.

Schneider, Hans-Peter. 2005. The Federal Republic of Germany. In *Dialogues on Distribution of Powers and Responsibilities in Federal Countries*, edited by R. Blindenbacher and A. Ostien. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Simeon, Richard, and Martin Papillon. 2006. Canada. In *Distribution of Power and Responsibilities in Federal Countries*, edited by A. Majeed, R. L. Watts, D. M. Brown and J. Kincaid. Montreal, Kingston, London, Ithaca: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Skogstad, Grace. 2000. Canada: Dual and Executive Federalism, Ineffective Problem-Solving. In *Public Policy and Federalism*, edited by D. Braun. Aldershot, Burlington, Singapore & Sydney: Ashgate.

Spillemaeckers, Sophie, and Kris Bachus. 2009. Institutional aspects of governance for sustainable development in Flanders. Paper read at the Fourth International Conference on Sustainable Development and Planning, 13-15 May, at Cyprus.

Steurer, Reinhard. 2009. Sustainable development as governance reform agenda: An aggregation of distinguished challenges for policy-making (Discussion Paper 1-2009). Vienna: Institute of Forest, Environmental and Natural Resource Policy, University of Natural Resources and Applied Life Sciences.

Steurer, Reinhard, and André Martinuzzi. 2005. Towards a new pattern of strategy formation in the public sector: first experiences with national strategies for sustainable development in Europe. *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy* 23: 455-472.

Swenden, Wilfried. 2006. *Federalism and Regionalism in Western Europe. A Comparative and Thematic Analysis*. Houndmills & New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Swenden, Wilfried, Marleen Brans, and Lieven De Winter. 2006. The Politics of Belgium: Institutions and Policy under Bipolar and Centrifugal Federalism. *West European Politics* 29 (5): 863-873.

Swenden, Wilfried, and Maarten Theo Jans. 2006. 'Will It Stay or Will It Go?' Federalism and the Sustainability of Belgium. *West European Politics* 29 (5): 877-894.

Tarasofsky, Richard. 2007. Canada's Progress in Addressing the Strategic Imperatives set out in "Our Common Future". Winnipeg: International Institute for Sustainable Development.

Tils, Raf. 2007. The German Sustainable Development Strategy: Facing Policy, Management and Political Strategy Assessments. *European Environment* 17: 164-176.

Tomblin, Stephen G. 2000. Federal constraints and regional integration in Canada. In *Federalism and Political Performance*, edited by U. Wachendorfer-Schmidt. London & New York: Routledge.

Toner, Glen. 2000. Canada: From Early Frontrunner to Plodding Anchorman. In *Implementing Sustainable Development. Strategies and Initiatives in High Consumption Societies*, edited by W. M. Lafferty and J. Meadowcroft. New York: Oxford University Press.

United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED). 1992. *Agenda 21: Programme of Action for Sustainable Development*. United Nations Department of Public Information.

United Nations General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS). 1997. Programme for the further implementation of Agenda 21. New York: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

Van den Brande, Karoline. 2009a. Subnational Agents in Global Governance for Sustainable Development? Exploring Routes for Flanders to the UN Commission on Sustainable Development. Paper read at the 2009 Amsterdam Conference on the Human Dimension of Global Environmental Change, 2-4 Dec, at Amsterdam.

———. 2009b. The Flemish Subnational Government in the Decision-Making Process for the UN CSD. Case Study: CSD-16 (working paper). Leuven: Steunpunt Duurzame Ontwikkeling.

van Muijen, Marie-Louise. 2000. The Netherlands: ambitious on goals—ambivalent on action. In *Implementing Sustainable Development. Strategies and Initiatives in High Consumption Societies*, edited by W. M. Lafferty and J. Meadowcroft. New York: Oxford University Press.

Vlaamse overheid. 2009. Subsidiegids 2009. Projectsubsidies Vlaamse overheid duurzame ontwikkeling. Brussel: Vlaamse overheid, Diensten voor het Algemeen Regeringsbeleid.

Wachendorfer-Schmidt, Ute. 2000. Collaborative federalism in Germany. Keeping the system in the eye of the storm. In *Federalism and Political Performance*, edited by U. Wachendorfer-Schmidt. London & New York: Routledge.

World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED). 1987. *Our Common Future*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press.

World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD). 2002. Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development. New York: UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

Zaccaï, Edwin. 2002. *Le développement durable. Dynamique et constitution d'un projet*. Bruxelles - Bern - Berlin - Frankfurt/M - New York - Oxford - Wien: P.I.E.-Peter Lang.