

Preface

In 1999, we were asked to submit evidence to a parliamentary inquiry on environmental policy organized by the UK Environmental Audit Committee. With hindsight, this was a time of high hopes amongst those advocating something new known as ‘environmental policy integration’ – a policy principle first established by the Brundtland Commission in 1987. The principle of environmental policy integration (or EPI) is not a hard and fast decision rule, but broadly speaking it suggests that environmental thinking should be integrated into sectoral policy making at the earliest available opportunity in order to make human development more sustainable. Traditionally, the core task of environmental policy makers has been to remedy the environmental damage generated by cognate sectors (such as agriculture, transport and energy) by regulating their activities. Brundtland’s motive for pushing for EPI was to institutionalize a more anticipatory approach to environmental problem solving, which would aim to ‘design out’ environmental damage from policies before they were formally adopted and implemented.

The Environmental Audit Committee had been established by Tony Blair’s new Labour government in 1997 and given the task of monitoring the UK’s implementation of EPI and sustainable development. In 1998, the European Union (EU) had launched a high-level initiative at EU level known as the Cardiff Process, and the Audit Committee was eager to understand how well this had performed and how it might impact on national policy making in the UK, where a similar initiative (‘Greening Government’) had been running since 1997. The Audit Committee’s principal finding was that Brundtland was right: the ‘post hoc’ approach had had its day and that henceforth ‘the emphasis [must] shift towards creating a more integrated framework for a preventative approach to environmental protection’ (House of Commons 1999: v). In Europe, this implied that the EU institutions should make every effort to ‘coordinate their policies and working practices under strong leadership and strategic direction to achieve real change’ (ibid.).

Were such a change ever fully to occur it would, as the title of this book makes clear, represent a profound innovation in the orientation and structures of environmental policy making. In our evidence (Jordan and Lenschow 1999), we sought to draw the committee’s attention to some of

the barriers to successful integration, particularly those in multi-level political systems such as the EU, in which high-level principles (such as EPI) that enjoy political support have a tendency to be differentially interpreted and applied in the everyday 'grind' of policy making (see also Jordan and Lenschow 2000).

Ten years on, it is apparent that most of the European countries that pledged to 'integrate the environment for sustainable development' have not made nearly as much progress as they had declared when the European Commission launched the Cardiff Process. This book seeks to document and assess what has been done in the name of EPI. It does so by drawing together a series of studies of the most common implementing instruments and the varied experiences of applying them in six OECD states and the EU. Written by a team of international experts using a common analytical framework, it seeks to draw together insights into the broad patterns and dynamics of EPI at different spatial scales and in a variety of policy sectors.

As with many books, this one has been a rather long time in the writing. The team of authors first met in Norwich in March 2005 principally to share experiences, reflect on the state of knowledge (as it then was) and agree upon a common approach. We met again in Cambridge in October 2005 to discuss first drafts of the chapters and deepen our mutual understanding of the links between EPI and sustainable development. Then we met once again in Stockholm in December 2006. At this third and final meeting, we identified and debated the main findings of our collective analysis.

We firmly believe that by organizing ourselves in this way, we have been able to produce a genuinely integrated book which represents much more than a jumble of individual chapters prefaced with an introductory essay by us, the two editors. On the contrary, the structure and the key messages to emerge from this book are the outcome of a joint enterprise.

We have accumulated a large number of debts during the production of this book. First and foremost, we would like to thank the contributors for their enormous enthusiasm and enduring commitment. By forging strong bilateral links with one another and with us, they have powerfully confirmed that there is such a thing as 'self-organizing governance'.

Most of the funding for the three workshops was kindly provided by the UK Economic and Social Research Council Programme on Environmental Decision Making, which was managed by CSERGE (the Centre for Social and Economic Research on the Global Environment) between 2001 and 2007. We are indebted to Dawn Turnbull and Emily Sheldon for their efficient administrative support and kind hospitality, particularly during the first workshop in Norwich. Måns Nilsson – one of the authors of the chapter on EPI in Sweden – kindly co-organized the third seminar in

Sweden that not only allowed us to discuss the conclusions of our comparative analysis of EPI measures, but also provided an important opportunity to share insights with a larger network of researchers (PINTS – Policy Integration for Sustainability) that had just successfully completed a study of EPI in Sweden.

We would also like to thank Ingmar von Homeyer, Anthony Zito and Henrik Gudmundsson, who agreed to participate in the first seminar in Norwich, at which the broad outline of the project was established. Subsequently, David Benson, David Wilkinson, Andrew Ross and John Hoornbeek agreed to join the team. Their contributions (on green budgeting, and EPI in Australia and the USA respectively) helped to extend greatly the coverage of the project – and hence this volume – to areas that are barely covered by the existing literature. We are extremely grateful to all of them for their time and effort. We would also like to thank Ingmar for subsequently inviting us to participate in an EU-funded network on EPI (EPIGOV – Environmental Policy Integration and Multi-level Governance), generously supported by the 6th Research Framework Programme (Contract no. 028661). This network has enabled us to refine our ideas and share them with a much larger audience. The European Commission's financial support is gratefully acknowledged. Finally, we would like to thank Catherine Elgar and her team at Edward Elgar for supporting our work and guiding it to publication, and Sylvia Potter, the copy editor.

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