ROUTLEDGE ADVANCES IN EUROPEAN POLITICS

Sustainable Development and Governance in Europe

The evolution of the discourse on sustainability

Edited by
Pamela M. Barnes and
Thomas C. Hoerber

ROUTLEDGE

Sustainable Development and Governance in Europe

This book analyses the evolution of the sustainability discourse in the European Union, exploring the conditions necessary for sustainable development to move from a conceptual model to a model for action for strategic decision makers at all levels of governance.

This book questions the extent to which the discourse on sustainability has become embedded into governance structures in Europe. It focuses on the importance of the nature of the language of the political discourse on sustainability and how ideas are communicated amongst the actors and stakeholders in the policy making process, as well as assessing the conceptual, political, institutional and operational barriers apparent across the European geographic region. Drawing case studies from numerous policy areas – including climate change, EU emissions trading schemes, renewable energy, nuclear energy, the European integrated energy market, transport mobility and environmental protection – expert contributors unveil a narrowing of the discourse on sustainability that has taken place in Europe. However, a considerable discontinuity remains between the economic and environmental objectives of sustainable development, and the authors argue that it is essential that conditions for a dynamic discourse, open to multiple participants, are maintained.

Sustainable Development and Governance in Europe will be of strong interest to students and scholars of comparative politics, governance, sustainable development, and environmental politics and studies.

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Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group
LONDON AND NEW YORK

First published 2013
by Routledge
2 Park Square Milton Park Abingdon Oxon OX14 4RN

Simultaneously published in the USA and Canada
by Routledge
711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business.

© 2013 Pamela M. Barnes and Thomas C. Hoerber for selection and editorial matter; individual contributors their contribution.

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data
Sustainable development and governance in Europe: the evolution of the discourse on sustainability / Edited by Pamela M. Barnes and Thomas C. Hoerber.
pages ; cm. – (Routledge advances in European politics; 96)
Includes bibliographical references and index.
1. Sustainable development–Europe. 2. Europe–Economic policy. 3. Europe–Politics and government–1989– I. Barnes, Pamela M., 1950– editor of compilation. II. Hoerber, Thomas C. editor of compilation.
HC240.9.E5S83 2013
338.94'07–dc23 2012050056

ISBN: 978-0-415-63007-8 (hbk)
ISBN: 978-0-203-76873-0 (ebk)

Typeset in Times New Roman
by Wearset Ltd, Boldon, Tyne and Wear

To Wynn Christopher, born during the compilation of this volume and to whom, as to all children, we owe our best efforts to ensure a sustainable future.

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Editors' preface

This book includes contributions from an international and multidisciplinary research network formed to analyse the evolution of the discourse on sustainability in Europe. The Governance for Sustainability in Europe research network was established with support from the University Association for Contemporary European Studies (UACES), and was co-financed by Ecole Supérieure des Sciences Commerciales d'Angers (ESSCA) Graduate School of Management, Angers, France and the Universities of Leeds and Bradford, UK. The network includes more than 50 international contributors. They are drawn from the academic community, policy makers, policy implementers and practitioners. All have research expertise in various aspects of environmental policy in Europe, in both theoretical and applied contexts.

The conveners of the network were:

- Dr Jenny Fairbrass, Senior Lecturer in Strategy, Head of the Strategy, Economics and International Business group, University of Bradford, UK.
- Dr Thomas Hoerber, Associate Professor, ESSCA Graduate School of Management, Angers, France.
- Dr Simon Lightfoot, Senior Lecturer in European Politics, POLIS Director of Learning and Teaching, University of Leeds, UK.

The research included in this volume was presented during a series of research workshops held by the members of the network at the universities of Bradford (2009), Leeds (2010), ESSCA, Angers (2011) and Trinity Hall, University of Cambridge (2012). The diversity of the disciplines and interests of the research network has provided an opportunity for wide-ranging exchange of views and ideas about the evolution of the political discourse on sustainability in Europe. Furthermore, it has enabled the members of the research network to analyse the conditions necessary for sustainable development to move from a conceptual model into a structure for long-term strategic action by decision makers at all levels of governance. The case studies in this volume are drawn from supranational, national and sub-national levels of governance, in contrast to other volumes which adopt an approach based on cases from the supranational and national levels or focus solely on the sub-national. Although national cases are included in the volume, the authors have not focused on discrete country-by-country analyses, but have adopted a thematic approach.

Acknowledgements

The editors wish to thank ESSCA Graduate School of Management, Angers, France, for the generous financial help and support they have provided during the compilation of this volume. Our special thanks go to Professor Jacques Boulay (Director of Research and School Developments, ESSCA) and Professor Albrecht Sonntag (Scientific Director of the Centre for European Integration, ESSCA) for their encouragement to proceed with the book, and to Ms Aline Brisset (Administrator, International Affairs Department/Centre for European Integration, ESSCA) for her help and support in organizing workshops and meetings.

Our thanks also go to the University Association for Contemporary European Studies (UACES) which provided the financial support to form the Collaborative Research Network (CRN), of which we are all members, and to the European Co-operation in Science and Technology (COST) Research Network on the Transformation of Global Environmental Governance: risks and opportunities (TGEG) and Trinity Hall, Cambridge, for providing funding for our workshop in Cambridge, 2012.

We send thanks to Heidi Bagtazo, Routledge, for her advice and support and to Alexander Quayle, Routledge, for his patience, tolerance and good humoured responses to even the most trivial of our questions. Thanks also go to our copy editor, Helen Belgian Cooper and Amy Ekins, Wearset.

Finally, but most important of all, we would like to thank all the contributors to this volume who have worked so hard to meet the deadlines which we imposed upon them.

Abbreviations

AOSIS	Alliance of Small Island States
ATTAC	Association pour la taxation des transactions financières et pour l'action citoyenne
BR	Brundtland Report
CAF	Community Advisory Forum/fora
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CCS	Carbon capture and storage
CEC	Commission of the European Union/European Commission
CEE	Central and Eastern Europe
CFC	Chlorofluorocarbon
CFP	Common Fisheries Policy
CO_2	Carbon dioxide
COM	Commission of the European Union/European Commission
COST	European Co-operation in Science and Technology
CRN	Collaborative Research Network
CTP	Common Transport Policy
DEFRA	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (UK government)
DG CLIM	Directorate-General for Climate Action
EAEC	European Atomic Energy Community (EURATOM)
6EAP	Sixth Environmental Action Programme
EAP	Environmental Action Programme (of the European Communities)
EC	European Community
ECCP	European Climate Change Programme
ECSC	European Coal and Steel Community
EDF	Electricité de France
EEC	European Economic Community
EfW	Energy from waste
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
EM	Ecological modernization
EP	European Parliament
EPE	Energy Policy for Europe

EPI	Environmental policy integration
EPR	European Pressurised Water Reactor
EREC	European Renewable Energy Council
ERGEG	European Regulators Group of Electricity and Gas
ESA	Euratom Supply Agency
ESEE	European Society for Ecological Economics
ESO	Euratom Safeguards Office
ETS	Emissions Trading Scheme
EU	European Union
EU ETS	European Union Emissions Trading Scheme
EURATOM	Treaty establishing the European Atomic Energy Community/ European Atomic Energy Community
GHG	Greenhouse gas(es)
GHGE	Greenhouse gas emission(s)
GOR	Government Office for the Region
GWe	Gigawatt of electricity energy
HCC	Hampshire County Council
HWS	Hampshire Waste Services
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
IEA	International Energy Agency
IEM	Internal Energy Market
INES	International Nuclear Events Scale
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
ITER	International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources
JMC(E)	Joint Ministerial Committee, European Issues (UK)
JUSSCANNZ	Group of Japan, US, Switzerland, Canada, Australia, Norway, New Zealand in global climate change negotiations
LAA	Local Area Agreement
LEP	Local Enterprise Partnership
LNP	Local Nature Partnership
MEP	Member of the European Parliament
MSP	Member of the Scottish Parliament
NAREC	National Renewable Energy Centre
NAW	National Assembly for Wales
NCSD	National Centre for Sustainable Development
NEA	Nuclear Energy Agency
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization(s)
NOx	Nitrogen oxide
NSD	Nuclear Safety Directive
NSDS	National Sustainable Development Strategy(ies)
NWDA	North West Development Agency
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development in Europe

OJ	Official Journal of the European Union (European Communities)
OSD	Onyx South Downs (subsidiary company to Veolia, renamed as Veolia)
PFI	Private finance initiative
PIP	Priority Interconnection Plan
PM	Prime Minister
RBD	River Basin District (of the Water Framework Directive)
RDA	Regional Development Agency
RES	Renewable energy sources
RTD	Research and technology development
RWD	Radioactive Waste Directive
SD	Sustainable development
SDC	Sustainable Development Commission
SDS	Sustainable Development Strategy
SE	Scottish Executive
SEA	Single European Act
SET-Plan	European Strategic Energy Technology Plan
SNP	Scottish National Party
SO_2	Sulphur dioxide
SOAFD	Scottish Office Agriculture, Environment and Fisheries Department
TEC	Treaty establishing the European Community
TEU	Treaty on European Union
TfEU	Treaty on the functioning of the European Union
UACES	University Association for Contemporary European Studies
UK	United Kingdom
UKRep	United Kingdom Permanent Representation to the European Union (Brussels)
UN	United Nations
UNCSD	United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNWCED	United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development
USA	United States of America
WCA	Waste Collection Authority
WCC	World Council of Churches
WCED	World Commission on Environment and Development
WDA	Waste Disposal Authority
WEC	World Energy Council
WFD	Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC)
WMO	World Meteorological Organization
WNA	World Nuclear Association

WPA	Waste Planning Authority
WWI	World War One (1914–1918)
WWII	World War Two (1939–1945)
YHA	Yorkshire and Humber Assembly

Introduction

Establishing the research questions and methodological framework

Pamela M. Barnes and Thomas C. Hoerber

Research themes and questions

Dryzek, in his analysis of the development of the environmental discourse of the 1950s and 1960s, highlighted the hegemonic position in the political discourse of the concept of 'industrialism'. He characterized industrialism 'in terms of its overarching commitment to growth in the quantity of goods and services and to the material well-being that growth brings' (Dryzek 2005: 13, 2nd edition). As the single dominant discourse of the period, industrialism conditioned not only the agreement of its proponents with the concept's central tenets, but also the development of any opposing viewpoint. The opposing view which Dryzek saw emerging during the 1950s and 1960s was couched in terms of a discourse of sustainability (Dryzek 2005: 22).

However, a pre-occupation with the challenges of sustainability was not completely new in the 1950s. It had origins in debates which had taken place for generations about the potential of the ecosystem to subsist over time. But for many in the 1950s and 1960s the sustainability discourse had a limited focus, primarily upon ecological sustainability, which led Pearce to later conclude that a sustainable future 'may well be awful', unless certain conditions were met, specifically that both inputs and outputs were sustained and social goals other than Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth were embraced (Pearce 1993: 5). Sustainable development, by incorporating economic sustainability with ecological sustainability, significantly altered the political discourse about how economic and environmental objectives should become linked in policy decision making. The conceptual model of sustainable development was based on the idea that economic growth and environmental protection were interdependent and should not be perceived in isolation one from another.

Sustainable development emerged as a significant element of political debate throughout Europe following the publication of the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) (the Brundtland Report) in 1987. The report highlighted the problems of increasing environmental damage and degradation which accompanied high levels of consumption of natural resources in the industrialized world. The objective set in the Brundtland Report was to establish patterns of development which would be sustainable for all and result in better life quality for current and future generations. (See Figure I.1).

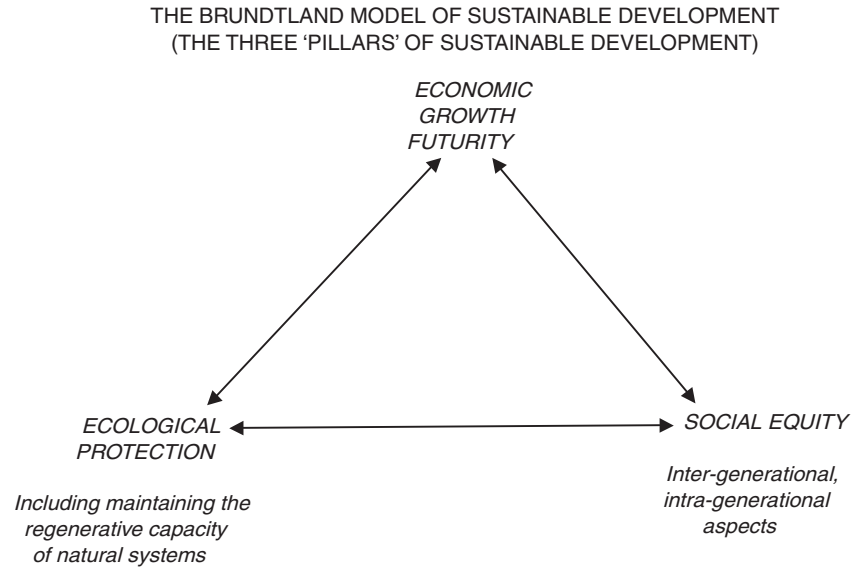

Figure I.1 The Brundtland model of sustainable development (the three 'pillars' of sustainable development).

As it developed, in the 1980s the discourse on sustainable development encapsulated a more optimistic element than the hegemonic environmental discourse of the 1960s, in which the only alternative to curb the demands being placed on the environment was to introduce draconian action imposing constraints on the model of economic development which had taken hold in the industrialized world.

Since the 1980s the concept of sustainable development has become the 'accepted wisdom' of the discourse amongst institutional actors and non-institutional stakeholders at all stages of the policy cycle. As a conceptual model it encompasses complex changes in society in order to achieve the ends of economic development, environmental protection and social justice. Whilst evidence suggests that changes towards a sustainable society are taking place in Europe, there is also considerable evidence to suggest that there are still many issues where the necessary changes to behaviour have not been made. Baker highlighted the difficulties of promoting sustainable development 'amidst a profound lack of knowledge about the complex and dynamic interactions between society, economic development, technology and nature' (Baker ESEE 2009).

The editors and contributors to this volume, all members of the University Association for Contemporary European Studies (UACES) Collaborative Research Network on Sustainability, have turned their attention to a trend which has emerged in the literature of the discourse on sustainability, which analyses

the linkage of the two conceptual models of sustainable development and governance (Lafferty 2004; Baker 2010). The objective of their research was to evaluate the extent to which the conceptual model of sustainable development has become the model for action in formal and informal governance structures in Europe. It was not the intention of the research network to impose limitations on its members with regard to the theoretical approach, the nature of the case studies or the governance structures they analysed; indeed, the objective was the very opposite. The research network sought to bring together an extensive group of academics, policy makers and practitioners from differing disciplinary backgrounds in order to engage in wide-ranging debate about sustainability in Europe.

Three thematic strands were identified around which the deliberations of the research network coalesced. The first of these was the theme of sustainability, focusing on the differing discourses which manifest around the concept of sustainability and looking at the ways in which language, lexicons and systems of classification can construct meanings within different social contexts and affect the formation of value meanings. Crucially, a political logic is evident as the term 'sustainability' is used by a wide variety of actors to rationalize action and develop proposals. Two questions were posed for analysis in this thematic strand: first, how have policy makers translated sustainability into economic, social and environmental principles; and, second, how are these 'operationalized' via human institutions that participate in the governance of sustainability where the public, private and voluntary sectors are the key actors?

The second theme concentrated on recent developments in the discourse, analysing the ways in which 'environmental' concerns are being extended into 'traditional' energy policy areas such as those relating to European gas and electricity networks, transport fuel, and the generation of nuclear electricity. The third theme questioned the extent to which an 'environmental conscience' has developed in Europe. The concept of an 'environmental conscience' refers to a 'deep green world view', which arguably sets the boundaries of 'green' policies. The research within this theme explored how the nature of a moral obligation towards the environment has varied over time. Shifts in the discourse defining the term 'environment' were identified, from a passive sense of 'surroundings' to an active sense of 'protection' once environmental degradation came to be viewed as a threat to the 'normal' conduct of human life.

However what quickly became apparent was that a number of underlying themes were present in the analysis being carried out within the research network, including:

1 The importance of the nature of the language of the political discourse on sustainability.
2 The process by which ideas are communicated amongst the actors and stakeholders in the policy and decision making processes.
3 The process which takes place as the discourse becomes embedded in governance structures at all levels.

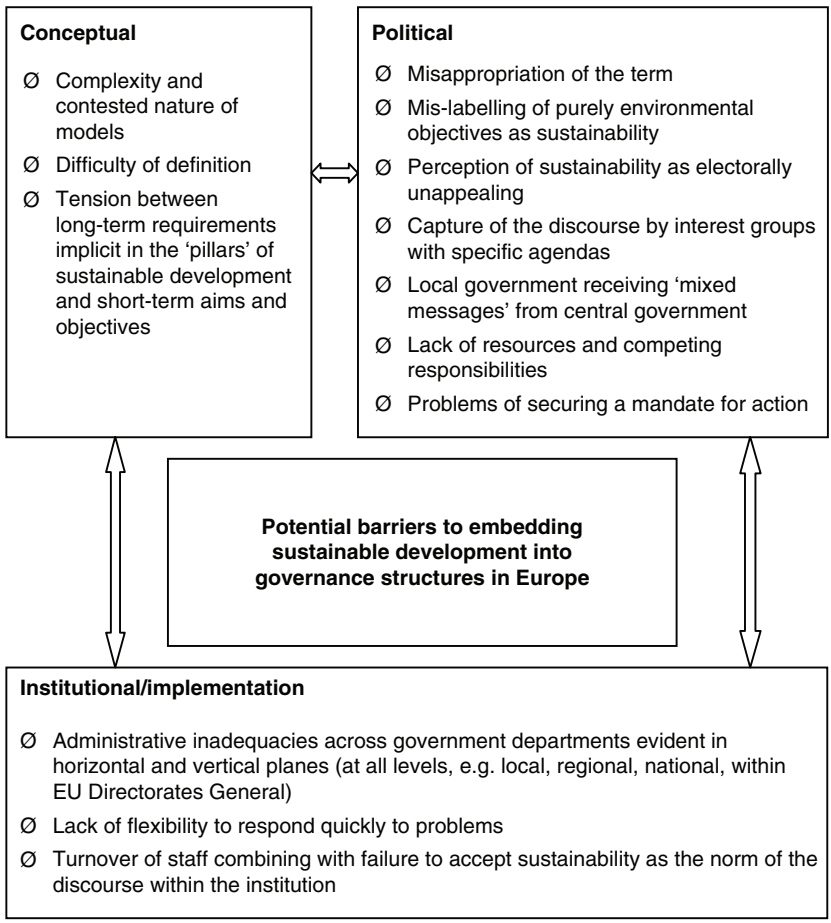

Figure I.2 Typology of potential barriers to embedding sustainable development into governance structures in Europe.

The evidence from the chapters highlighted a failure to establish common ideas and referents in the discourse as the core of the difficulties in establishing effective policies for sustainable development in Europe. This failure to establish a discourse based on common ideas and referents in turn undermines the development of governance structures to steer progress towards sustainability. It is argued in this volume that in order to achieve the linkage of sustainable development and governance, communication and acceptance of political ideas, resulting in the development of agreed norms and codes of conduct, are of vital importance.

As a result of the deliberations during the various workshops held by the research network two research questions emerged, which have formed the basis of this book: