

THE POLITICS OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: SUSTAINABILITY PLANNING IN THE UK AND TURKEY*

SEMRA CERIT MAZLUM**

1. Introduction

With its rise to political prominence, sustainable development has become a legitimate goal for environmental policy. However, as a complex and multifaceted political issue, sustainable development has posed a great challenge to the policy-makers as to how to translate this ambiguous political ideal into circles of policy-making. Over nearly two decades, governments and international organizations have taken various initiatives aimed at realizing the idea. Recently, national strategies or policy plans for sustainable development have drawn more attention from academic and political circles.

This paper aims to explore sustainable development policies in the UK and Turkey within a comparative perspective. In its attempt to provide a comparative analysis of changes in sustainability policies of the two countries, the paper utilizes the insights provided by the political theories of policy change and learning. The scope of the examination is limited to policies formulated and implemented through national sustainability planning initiatives, but takes into account the overall outlook of sustainability politics.

The reason for choosing the two countries for comparison is twofold. First, the two countries are OECD members while being at different levels of economic development. Most comparative

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** Dr., Department of Political Science and International Relations, Marmara University, Istanbul, Turkey.

studies involved OECD countries by singling out the most industrialized ones; therefore, the study may contribute to widening the scope of the emerging field. Moreover, it may provide a new perspective for addressing the question of whether patterns of sustainability policies are influenced by the country's economic development levels. The EU framework is the other ground for such a comparative attempt. The study may help to identify the EU's impact on the paths adopted by countries, be they members of the Union or candidate countries.

2. Strategies for Achieving Sustainability

Since the promotion of sustainable development as the overarching goal for environmental policy, countries have responded to the emerging idea by adopting diverse approaches. There have been continuing institutional innovations and experimentations with new instruments in order to integrate environmental and socioeconomic factors in policy-making and implementation processes. Countries followed different pathways to achieve sustainability depending on various factors, including their interpretation of the concept, political structures, and political priorities. Bührs and Aplin (1999), on the basis of their empirical study, proposed three distinct pathways pursued by governments in their engagement with sustainable development. The pathways identified by Bührs and Aplin (1999) are: institutional reform, green planning and social mobilization. We might add a fourth way that some countries show propensity for; governmental "disengagement" (Lafferty, Meadowcroft, 2000: 412) marked by the tendency to "leave it to the market" (Dryzek, 1997: 102). This approach is well concretized in the remarks made by an EPA administrator: "If set correctly, they [market forces] can achieve or surpass environmental objectives at least costs and with less opposition than traditional regulatory approaches" (quoted in Dryzek, 1997: 103).

In implementing sustainable development, many governments found it more conclusive to deal with the issue through institutional arrangements. To this end, some have chosen to reorient existing institutions to bring about integrated policies and implementation. Most have established new institutions to facilitate joined-up

policy-making. The most innovative result of these institutional reform efforts was the establishment of national commissions or committees for coordinating or overseeing sustainability policies.

Acknowledgment of the role played by societal actors has led some governments to create ways to involve as wide a spectrum of society as possible in the policy formulation and implementation processes. They have drawn up programs or launched campaigns to mobilize sections of society towards more sustainable practices. In some countries, involving target groups in policy-formulation processes was used as another way of social mobilization. In this regard, environmental citizenship initiatives and Local Agenda 21 programs proved capable of reinvigorating public involvement in sustainability policies.

Recognizing the need for a more structured policy framework for tackling complex issues, many countries have embarked on initiatives based on drawing up national plans or strategies. Despite their differences in terms of their policy orientation, structure, and processes by which they are developed, plans devised as vehicles of sustainability politics share some common elements. They are the documents aimed at formulating policies, setting goals, identifying instruments for achieving defined objectives. These initiatives were initially called the green planning approach because earlier plans were essentially concerned with environmental issues. However, with the introduction of sustainable development as the underlying policy goal and framing idea, the planning initiatives have taken new forms and structures. The plans have become more comprehensive in content, incorporating socioeconomic issues as well as environmental policies. Moreover, planning modalities have changed; a strict public policy planning approach has been replaced by a strategic view. More countries are undertaking national planning initiatives with diverse stimulations under diverse labels.

Such strategies or planning experiments are encouraged and promoted by international organizations. For example, Agenda 21 called on governments to prepare national sustainable development strategies harmonizing economic, social and environmental policies

and plans. This call was reiterated by UNGASS in 1997, setting a target date of 2002 for formulation and implementation of strategies. The more recent call for introducing national sustainable development strategies by 2005 was made by the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation. In addition, other international organizations, like OECD and WB have been supporting national planning efforts.

The changing character of such plans and strategies, which in turn brought changes to the formulation and implementation of sustainability policies, can be explored by applying political theories of policy learning. The applicability of the policy learning approach to sustainability planning is also supported by the nature of such initiatives. As suggested by Jänicke and Jörgens (2000: 614), sustainability planning can be viewed as “a permanent process of learning”. The strategic approach adopted by most planning initiatives itself implies an ongoing process of learning because it involves setting objectives, identifying means of achieving them, and monitoring progress. It is suggested that, by being revised periodically to take into account feedback and lessons from review following implementation, these strategies and programs would become genuine, cyclical, ‘learning by doing’ processes (Dala-Clayton and Bass, 2002: 37). In this sense, this study explores the applicability of policy learning approach to the evolution of such plans and strategies in order to understand and explain changes in sustainable development policies.

3. Policy Learning and Sustainable Development

How policies change in a given field has always been a long-standing question for the students of political science. Different theories and approaches have been developed to understand and explain policy changes. Political theories of policy change and learning are offered to complement the more conventional approaches to policy change that are based on political conflict (Fiorino, 2001). Policy learning literature suggests that learning takes place in policy processes, generating changes in many aspects of policies. Despite this common assumption, they differ in their focus on factors in explaining the patterns of change. They provide

different explanations as to who learns, what is learned, what is changed. But, drawing on the literature, it is possible to suggest that learning takes place on the level of underlying ideas, instruments employed, and between agents engaged. Policy-oriented learning would provide a useful analytical tool in examining sustainable development policy, and help to identify changes in policy processes.

Of the theories of policy oriented learning, Sabatier's advocacy coalition framework and Hall's social learning approach are seen as major contributions to the literature. For Sabatier, "policy-oriented learning is a major determinant of policy innovation and change" (Howlett and Ramesh, 1993: 14). He suggests that policy-oriented learning occurs primarily because policy networks understand how better to realize their core beliefs based on their past experiences. In this case of advocacy coalition framework, learning is not about core values informing policies but about techniques and processes of implementing policies (Howlett and Ramesh, 1993: 14).

In contrast, for Hall, in addition to instruments or techniques, learning can occur in terms of underlying values as well. Defining social learning as "a deliberate attempt to adjust the goals or techniques of policy in response to past experience and new information," Hall suggests that "learning is indicated when policy changes as a result of such a process" (Hall, 1993, 278). He distinguishes three forms of learning depending on the kinds of change in policy: The first is the change in the levels (settings) of the instruments, which he calls first order change. Second order change is related to the means of implementation; that is the change in the techniques or policy instruments employed to attain declared policy goals. And then, if what is changed are the overarching goals underlying policy, this is called third order change. Indicating a radical shift in policy, third order change is rare and comprises changes in the first and second levels. Ascribing a central role to ideas in effecting policy changes, Hall calls the frameworks of ideas specifying goals and instruments and the nature of the problem as a policy paradigm (Hall, 1993: 279). First and second order changes attempt to adjust policy without challenging overall terms of a given policy paradigm and can be seen as normal

policymaking. By contrast, third order change implies radical shift in the overarching terms of policy discourse. This paradigmatic change results from an array of factors including failures of past experiences, emergence of new ideas, experimentation with new policies, and shift in the locus of authority (Hall, 1993).

The learning process can also be investigated by looking at where and when learning happens. Relevant to our study, Howlett and Ramesh (1993: 17) identify three realms where learning can take place. The first is the inter-temporal dimension; it points to the cumulative character of policy learning. The second is the inter-sectoral dimension, which means that learning can occur across sectors. Thirdly, the learning process has a cross-national dimension in that it can occur across space. In examining the patterns of policy learning, the pace of change is another important dimension. It is suggested that changes in policies, either normal or paradigmatic, need not be sudden; they may be gradual or rapid. In other words, paradigmatic change may be gradual or rapid; the same applies to incremental change (Howlett and Ramesh, 1998: 472).

By applying the approach to the evolution of environmental policies in industrialized countries, Glasbergen (1996) discussed an alternative conceptualization of policy learning. He proposed four kinds of learning. Technical learning refers to experimentation with new instruments in search of improving the capacity of environmental management. Conceptual learning involves the shift of terms in understanding and framing the problems and redefining policy processes with the emergence of new concepts, such as sustainable development and ecological modernization. Cognitive learning takes place when new knowledge is acquired and external factors come into play. Accordingly, cognitive learning is about accumulation of knowledge and its better use in policy formulation and implementation. The fourth phase in the process is social learning which emphasizes the interaction and communication between actors. Glasbergen's model, though implicitly hierarchical, is particularly pertinent to our discussion here.

As a new but dynamic field of public policy, sustainable development offers a unique case for examination by applying policy learning approach. The Policy learning approach is especially relevant for examining sustainable development policy in that it is an issue area which is characterized by its complexity and associated uncertainties requiring new knowledge and understanding of problems. It is also a political issue that involves many actors with conflicting interests and diverse perceptions. Moreover, sustainable development is best understood as a process of change; it is an iterative process requiring policies to be improved both as a result of new knowledge and lessons drawn from experience. As Meadowcroft (1997a: 449) suggested, “engaging with sustainable development is not about implementing a particular program, nor about achieving a specific policy outcome. Instead, it is best thought of as a long-term social meta-objective, and as an idealistic benchmark by which to assess current practices”. So, the learning approach is particularly helpful for both implementing sustainable development policy and analyzing the changes in policies put into place.

Within its comparative framework, the paper attempts to apply the policy learning approach to sustainable development policies pursued in the UK and Turkey with special focus on national sustainable development planning processes. Drawing on discussions outlined above, I have adopted a rather narrow conceptualization of policy learning for comparison. The analysis is predicated on two categories of learning: conceptual learning and instrumental (technical) learning. So, the scope of the paper is limited to identifying changes in sustainability politics on conceptual and instrumental levels. In other words, it aims to investigate how sustainable development is conceptualized, how goals and objectives are defined, and which instruments are used within national sustainable development plans or strategies.

4. Politics of Sustainable Development in the UK

Since the promulgation of the concept into national and international environmental and development policy discourses, the UK has come a long way in dealing with the challenge of

sustainable development. Although it had a rather “cautiously supportive” stance towards the new notion in the beginning (Lafferty and Meadowcroft, 2000: 412), over time it has become one of the enthusiasts that support and encourage sustainability and related policies nationally and at the international level. Its move from hesitation to advocacy with regard to sustainability has resulted from the interplay of various factors both national and international. But, contributed mostly by the European Union environmental policy, the development of its institutional capacity to cope with environmental issues has played an important role in this process. So, the UK has made considerable progress in terms of institutionalizing sustainable development in its policy-making structures.

Referring back to the pathways pursued by countries in engaging with sustainable development, the UK’s pathway can be characterized as a combination of approaches. Although sustainable development policy has revolved around planning, it has been complemented by institutional reform and to some extent by programs aimed at social mobilization. While it is difficult to distinguish between the strategies and the various agencies by which those strategies are enacted, strategies have served as the focal point and principal driver of policy. So far, the UK has put three national strategies in place; and, the last one is under revision. Whereas two previous strategies have been criticized because of their failure to serve as policy guiding documents, the last strategy is seen as promising because of its elaborate pattern in policy formulation, goal definition and target setting. For instance, a recent cross-country comparison on national sustainable development strategies recognizes the innovative capacity of the UK’s strategy (Swanson et al., 2004).

Despite early engagement with the idea, sustainable development has not permeated easily into the UK’s policy-making structures. This was mainly because of the nature of British environmental policy style and difficulties inherent in sustainable development as a policy issue. As a new policy objective, sustainable development was first added on to the existing policies and proceeded within established practices, so it took time for the concept to be

embedded into policy processes. The long-established environmental policy structure and style were not prepared for injection of a new notion. Environmental policy-making in the UK has long been characterized as piecemeal, incremental, fragmented and reactive (Carter and Lowe, 1998; Lowe and Ward, 1998: 7-9; Jordan et al., 2003). It is argued that this pattern resulted from the fact that Britain's environmental laws and institutions have developed on an ad hoc basis as a reaction to environmental problems as they arose. In addition, a sector-based, informal and consensus-oriented style of environmental policy (Jordan et al., 2003) further complicated the situation. In this outlook, where the policy coordination problem prevails, introduction of sustainable development with its main postulate, namely integration of economic, social and environmental decisions, posed a great challenge to British environmental policy-making. But, despite these earlier difficulties, Britain has sought to adjust policy-making processes and institutions to better meet the needs of sustainability politics.

As noted earlier, the UK has undertaken the task of implementing sustainable development principally by drawing up strategies and introducing new institutional mechanisms to ensure their implementation. The first initiative was a White Paper, *This Common Inheritance: Britain's Environmental Strategy*, published in 1990. The White Paper set out the country's environmental strategy within a 20 year vision (Voisey and O'Riordan, 1998: 158). It was criticized for its lack of clear objectives and firm targets. The strategy was seen essentially as a policy summarizing document compiling measures and commitments that have already been taken or declared (Young, 2000; Voisey and O'Riordan, 1998; Carter and Lowe, 1998: 32; Weale, 1997: 103-104). Although the White Paper adopted sustainable development as a principle, it was essentially an environmental strategy in its orientation. Nevertheless, taking a strategic approach towards environmental issues, it represented a small change from prevailing policy structure.

The Rio Summit gave a new impetus to the political engagement with sustainable development. In 1994, government issued the

second strategy, *Sustainable Development: the UK's Strategy*, partly as a response to the UNCED process. Seen as another missed opportunity, the 1994 Strategy received similar criticisms. Voisey and O'Riordan (1998:16) described the document as "just a continuation of the white paper exercise" because of its inability to "drive policy". However, although it did not meet expectations because of the absence of elaborate measures for policy coordination and quantitative targets, the 1994 Strategy with its institutional outputs can be seen as another step in unfolding sustainable development into policy processes.

In 1999, the third strategy document, *A Better Quality of Life: A Strategy for Sustainable Development for the UK* replaced the previous one. It can be seen as the culmination of earlier attempts. Although the 1999 Strategy was built on the previous strategy, its different approach is manifest in many respects. With its much more comprehensive approach to the notion of sustainable development, the strategy embodied more structured goal formulation, clear targets, and actions. This strategy is currently under revision and will be replaced by 2005.

On the basis of this background information, we can now turn to examine the trajectory of sustainable development in policy processes and try to ascertain policy changes. Because strategies as governmental policy statements are the main drivers of sustainability policies, they provide the basis for such an evaluation and give ample evidence. At first sight, titles of the documents may indicate a shift in the way the issue is framed. From 1990 to 1999, in titles, the UK has moved from an environmentally-focused interpretation of sustainable development to the more elaborated definition. The title, "Better Quality of Life" shows the understanding on which the UK is inclined to handle sustainable development in policy-making.

The first category of evaluation is based on the conceptualization of sustainable development. *This Common Inheritance* was hesitant to wholly endorse the policy requirements of the notion. Although it was intended to support sustainable development, it confined the concept to a few sentences without elaborating on its policy

implications, and paid little attention to the need of integrating environment into other policy areas. Also it gave rise to a terminological confusion, sometimes referring to sustainable growth. According to Vosiey and O’Riordan (1998:17), its continued emphasis on economic growth indicated a very weak understanding of the concept. Precedence of economic growth over other components of sustainable development was apparent throughout the document. With respect to reconciliation of environmental concerns and economic priorities, the document lacked specific measures. In addition, the White Paper looked only to institutional arrangements for policy coordination and integration of environment into other policy areas.

However, despite its weakness in integrating the three elements of sustainable development into policy formulation, the White Paper was seen as a sign of change in environmental policy-making because it introduced a strategic approach into policy structures. The White Paper established inter-ministerial committees to ensure policy coordination. Weale (1997:107) has argued that this mechanism did not function as intended “because inter-departmental committees have only met infrequently”. With regard to annual reports to track progress against targets, Weale (1997: 103) argued that it was not certain in annual reports whether targets were being met. But, overall, these changes in the “machinery of government” introduced by the document laid the ground for further institutional reforms on which basis sustainable development policy proceeded.

The 1994 Strategy appeared to have been formulated in a more comprehensive manner compared to the White Paper, whereas it did not meet expectations. The strategy did not provide an operational definition of sustainable development, and instead made reference to the Brundtland definition, stating that it was difficult to define. Although it purported to be a strategy for sustainable development, it was not precise about to what the priority would be given when the trade-offs between economic development and environmental concerns were needed. It was structured in a way that emphasized economic growth over environmental protection. Despite its claim that sustainability was

taken as a policy guiding principle, the strategy stated that “sustainable development does not mean having less economic development; on the contrary a healthy economy is better able to generate resources to meet people’s needs... Nor does it mean that every aspect of the present environment should be preserved at all costs” (DoE, 1994:7). So, the document represented a rather mixed interpretation of the concept, and did not instigate new thinking about how sustainability can be better realized.

The document’s focus was on the environmental dimension, and social issues were still missing in its policy framework. For measures to integrate environment into other policy areas, the strategy depended mainly on institutional arrangements. In its inclination to coordinate policies through institutional reform, the strategy established three new bodies outside the departments: *the Government Panel on Sustainable Development*, *The UK Round Table on Sustainable Development* and, as a distinct initiative, the *Going for Green Programme*.

However, the strategy was different from the previous one in that it introduced some policy principles to guide policies. It expressed support for the ‘precautionary principle’, the ‘polluter pays principle’ and ‘best scientific information’. In addition, the Strategy supported the use of economic policy instruments for environmental purposes. Though it contained no specific proposal for economic instruments; during its implementation a few initiatives arose, including landfill tax. In terms of monitoring implementation, during its operational period, three annual reports were published in 1995, 1996 and 1997 to assess progress towards promised policy goals. And, in 1996, a set of indicators was set up to monitor progress against the targets. These indicators partly resulted from the advice coming from advisory bodies.

1999 may be seen as bringing a step change in the UK with regard to its political engagement with sustainable development. The new strategy, *A Better Quality of Life*, indicates a new stage in terms of mainstreaming sustainable development into policy-making processes. The new strategy reflects the new knowledge acquired throughout the period and lessons learned from earlier experiments.

The most obvious change was the way the Strategy conceptualized sustainable development as a policy objective. The Strategy endorsed a more comprehensive interpretation of the concept by trying to balance economic, social and environmental policy implications. The strategy also tried to accord national concerns with international obligations. It reformulated sustainable development policy by defining it as “a better quality of life for everyone, now and for generations to come” (DETR, 1999:8). Based on this underlying policy goal, the strategy set out four policy objectives: social progress which recognized the needs of everyone; effective protection of the environment, prudent use of natural resources; and maintenance of high and stable levels of economic growth and employment. The setting of objectives embodying social, economic and environmental concerns demonstrates a wider approach to the idea.

The document set out ten principles and approaches to guide the policy; and set targets for some issue areas and supported them by relevant indicators. For policy integration, although institutional mechanisms were the main source of coordination during the operational period, the strategy encompassing all three components can be seen as an advance. Moreover, to better embed the Strategy’s policy objectives into overall policy processes, additional measures were introduced. For example, policy targets are taken into account in Spending Reviews, departments are encouraged to prepare their departmental sustainable development reports for their bits, departmental Public Service Agreements considered the Strategy’s policy targets, Integrated Policy Assessment (IPA) was piloted in some departments, and a Regulatory Impact Assessment is applied to proposals for policies and programs.

The government promised to report annually on progress against policy targets and corresponding indicators to be accountable for its actions or inactions. The last annual report released in 2003 was the review of the whole process, as well. In addition, monitoring activity was supplemented by external assessment. The government established the *Sustainable Development Commission* superceding

the Panel and the Round Table. The Commission advises the prime minister directly on sustainable development policies and strategy.

Overall evaluation of the process from 1990 shows that Britain has adopted a politics of sustainable development by which the idea has gradually unfolded into policy-making processes. According to Young (2000:264) this change in the pattern of political engagement with the idea can be seen as a move from “political containment to integrated thinking”. He suggested that in the 1990s a substantial shift took place with respect to sustainable development politics “from simply trying to contain the environmental issue, to the emergence of some serious cross-sectoral thinking within a stronger framework” (Young, 2000: 264).

The above examination allows us to argue that Britain’s sustainable development policy has undergone an important change with respect to conceptualization of the issue, use of instruments devised to attain policy objectives, and institutional structure to deliver declared policy goals. Learning has played an inevitable role in this change. Political structures have been gradually aligned with the new knowledge emanating from various sources, including international fora and especially from the EU. Additionally, in the process, each strategy contributed valuable experience to policy-makers on which they would draw for new initiatives.

It is possible to identify two kinds of learning in the UK’s sustainable development policy. First of all, conceptual learning occurred, indicating a change in underlying policy goals. Sustainable development has become the framing idea rather than rhetoric, as was the case in the 1990 Strategy. On the level of instruments, increasing use of economic policy instruments can be explained as a process of technical learning. Moreover, other instruments introduced to integrate the environment into other policy areas contributed to the instrumental base of policies. In terms of social learning, the situation is somewhat vague. The first strategy emerged out of inter-departmental consultation; the 1994 Strategy tried to ensure as broad consultation as possible; and in the preparation of *Better Quality of Life*, a wider audience has been

included. Taking this participation-deficit into account, the UK government is trying to ensure a much broader consultation in the revision process of the 1999 Strategy. However, it is not possible to assess to what extent the consultation programs resulted in social learning.

To conclude, a preliminary evaluation suggests that in the UK sustainability politics produced more outputs than outcomes. As a recent report (SDC, 2004a) shows, many of the targets that were set up in the Strategy have not been met. It is too early to judge the process in terms of outcomes that it is supposed to bring about. However, it has made progress in improving institutional capacity to tackle this complex policy issue. The institutional arrangements that have been put into place may enable the country to proceed from outputs to outcomes. But, the country is learning by doing more. This pattern corresponds to what is said in the Sustainable Development Commission's latest review on the Strategy: "Shows promise; but must try harder" (SDC, 2004b).

5. Sustainability Politics in Turkey

Turkey's sustainable development policy has always been ambiguous; and this political stance was reflected in the way by which the concept is translated into policy making-processes. Political attention to the idea has been sporadic, gaining momentum from international conferences. This intermittent political interest has resulted in piecemeal, fragmented policies marked by incoherency and lack of long-term vision.

The ambiguity of the sustainable development policy is also an outcome of the problematic approach to the development-environment relationship. Throughout 1970s, the "growth versus environment impasse" (Meadowcroft, 1997b:169) shaped the discussion. It was thought that measures for environmental protection might hinder economic growth and could divert Turkey's determined path towards development. *The Third Five-Year Development Plan (FYDP)* (1973-1977) echoed this understanding by stating that "no international commitment which would prevent Turkey from industrial development would be

made” (SPO, 1972: 970). It seems that the language used in the plan shares parallels with the concerns raised by developing countries during the Stockholm Conference. However, the publication of the Brundtland report and the subsequent Rio Summit promoting the concept of sustainable development offered a way out of this environment-development dilemma. From the early 1990s, there emerged a new political understanding which recognized the need to reconcile economic priorities and environmental protection in development policies.

The environment emerged as a policy issue in the 1970s but gained salience for policy-making processes in the 1980s. In fact, institutionalization of environmental policy and the rise of sustainable development as a political issue occurred in the same period. Actually, this concurrence would have been an opportunity for Turkey to create political and administrative structures compatible with the demands of sustainable development from the outset. However, a sector-based, fragmented and compartmental structure of policy-making precluded the emergence of joined-up engagement with sustainability politics. Environmental policy has arisen incrementally as a sectoral policy on a piecemeal basis. Environmental policies and institutions have developed on an ad hoc basis in reaction to emerging problems. In terms of policy integration and coordination, it might be fair to argue that the environment remained an “add-on” to policy-making processes rather than embedded into other policy areas within a comprehensive approach. What is apparent is that despite the political commitment to sustainable development, measures taken to integrate environment into overall policy processes are far from sufficient.

On the basis of the above framework, we now can turn to exploring the pattern of policy planning for sustainable development in Turkey. Turkey does not have a comprehensive, multi-dimensional sustainable development strategy - unlike the UK. Instead, it chose to ensure delivering sustainability by a mechanism already in place, that is national development planning. Policies for sustainable development are formulated primarily in five-year development plans. But this process is supplemented by a national environmental

action plan (NEAP), which laid down the country's long-term environmental strategy. Additionally, stimulated by UNCED process and Agenda 21, a national *Agenda 21* was produced but it has not yet been put into operation.

From 1963 onwards, Turkey has operated a national development planning policy. The first plan containing a section for the environment was the third FYDP. And all subsequent plans included a section devoted to the environment. The motive behind this practice was the presumption that incorporating environment in the development plans might help integrate environment into other policy areas. By the *sixth FYDP* (1990-1994), sustainable development became the informing principle for environmental policies set out the plans. The sixth plan, which was influenced mostly by the Brundtland report's discussions, endorsed the notion to guide environmental policies. But the plan used a slightly different terminology in translating the concept into policy objectives. This conceptual imprecision actually implied a rather cautious approach to the emerging idea. Additionally, while the plan adopted sustainability as policy goal, it did not elaborate on political measures and instruments to attain it. The later, seventh, plan represented a much broader understanding of the concept; set up clear targets; and proposed actions for institutional reform. The current *eighth FYDP* (2001-2005) declares the failure of policies implemented so far to achieve sustainability but makes no attempt to reformulate policy objectives other than ascribing the role to the NEAP.

What appears from the evaluation of development plans is that, despite the intentions, practice has failed to mainstream sustainable development into the planning process. It seems that plans have little real effect in terms of integrating environmental considerations with other policy areas, and even less with regard to achieving environmental sustainability. The containment of the sustainability ideal in the environment sector has precluded cross-sectoral policy coordination. Environmental issues were addressed on a sectoral basis in isolation from social and economic policies; and this pattern sometimes led to contradictory objectives within the same plan. And environmental objectives remained

disentangled from macro policy objectives. This general outlook shows that the development planning process has not brought about a change in sustainable development policy. Notwithstanding their inability to fundamentally reorient development policies, the plans have nevertheless helped to convey the idea through policy-making processes.

The *NEAP* released in 1998 represents an important attempt in dealing with sustainable development with a strategic approach. Stimulated by the objective set up in the seventh FYDP to draw up a national environmental strategy, the NEAP initiative was undertaken by the State Planning Organization (SPO). The preparation of the plan was coordinated by SPO with technical assistance from the Ministry of Environment and the financial support of the World Bank. The legal basis of the NEAP is somewhat confusing; it was enacted in 1998 by a protocol signed by SPO and MoE. By contrast to development plans, the NEAP was presented as a sectoral development plan. This means that its implementation depends mostly on political will. The NEAP set a long-term vision with a time frame of 20 years for the implementation of actions that it contains. The actions proposed by the plan are carried out by relevant institutions; and MoE (now Ministry of Environment and Forestry) is responsible for overall coordination of the implementation.

As its name indicates, the NEAP is not a strategy for sustainable development, but an environmental strategy using sustainable development as the conceptual framework. Therefore, it does not attempt to define sustainable development, but does include sustainable development among its policy objectives. Framing objectives of the plan are: Improving the quality of life, improving environmental management, raising environmental awareness and, ensuring sustainable economic, social and cultural development (SPO, 1998). Departing from the conviction that ineffective institutional setting and lack of coordination are the real obstacles on the way to environmental sustainability, the plan is aimed at addressing inconsistencies on the institutional level. So, exclusively concerned with the institutional matters, NEAP paid little attention to setting environmental quality targets. Rather, it emerged as a

document proposing measures and actions aimed at increasing institutional capacity. With this structure, the plan seems to fall far short of meeting the need for a comprehensive strategy.

The review and monitoring mechanisms set out in the plan are very weak. It envisioned short and medium-term performance reviews to be carried out by MoE. So far, MoE has conducted a short-term review based on two-year implementation to assess progress against targets and communicated the report to relevant departments; but it is not available to the wider public. Also, the Plan laid down the terms of its revision after a five-year implementation period. In accordance with this provision, the eighth FYDP proposed the process to revise and update the NEAP on a legal basis. So far no action has been taken for such a revision. How far the NEAP process has been able to deliver its objectives is far from apparent. Due to its legal status, the plan lacks a clear mandate for its implementation. The only mechanism set in place is the integration of NEAP actions into annual programs prepared by SPO. The guidance on annual public investment programs prepared by SPO encourages public bodies to take into account the NEAP in their project proposals.

Evaluated from the policy-learning perspective, it is not easy to identify clear-cut changes in policies aimed at sustainable development in Turkey. Obviously, some new institutional and instrumental arrangements have been introduced into policy-making processes, but it is too early to suggest that they created fundamental changes in policy structures. Change on the conceptual level is limited to the endorsement of sustainability as policy framing idea. However, it does not seem to indicate a paradigmatic shift in policy processes, because any such shift was not accompanied by an effort to further elaborate on the political implications of the concept. It can be suggested that sustainability is added on to existing policies and programs without changing underlying values and policy goals. This is obvious from the way sustainable development is translated into development plans and the NEAP. So far, no operational definition has been provided in the development plans and even in the NEAP. The plans set a policy objective “to ensure economic and social development by

protecting human health and ecological balance” (SPO, 2001) implying sustainability as ‘an’ underlying policy goal. This understanding reveals the persistent focus on economic development without fully integrating the three pillars of sustainability within the planning processes.

Additionally, both the development plans and the NEAP deal with sustainability in terms of the environmental component of the concept. So, all efforts made so far have not produced a comprehensive policy approach. Containment of the issue in environment sector has reinforced the tendency pervasive in the policy-making process to tackle problems on a sectoral basis. This pattern, lacking policy-coordinating instruments, has given rise to inconsistencies in environmental policies and policies across other sectors. All the policy documents have articulated the lack of coordination as a real impediment to the pursuit of sustainable development and proposed measures to ensure institutional and political coordination. The unaltered pattern indicates that no policy learning resulting in change in institutional structure has taken place hitherto. However, recently, stimulated by the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, an interdepartmental body, *Sustainable Development Commission* was established. The Commission, comprising representatives from SPO, the Ministry of Environment and Forestry, the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, is aimed at providing a channel for policy coordination.

It is possible to conclude that, in Turkey, there is an ongoing effort to adjust established policy patterns to meet the demands of sustainable development. Turkey has undertaken the task of promoting sustainability using different instruments; it has adjusted existing mechanisms and tried out new complementary ones. However, all these attempts remain disjointed because they are not concerted on the basis of a comprehensive policy strategy. All the three mechanisms, development planning, the NEAP and National Agenda 21 are developed and dealt with in isolation and no effective linkage was established between the goals and objectives. As a result of the recognition that these initiatives have failed to achieve desired objectives, an additional initiative is underway.

Supported by the EU, the new project aims to address the issue of integrating environment into other policy areas. All these piecemeal and fragmented initiatives reinforced the incremental pattern of policy-making preventing institutionalization of sustainability into policy-making structures.

Policy-learning requires lessons drawn from previous experience and new knowledge emerging from the national and international level to be translated into the policy-making process, so that existing policies are improved or changed. The above examination suggests that the policy-learning approach is not directly applicable to Turkey's sustainable development policy-making. Rather, the evidence implies a pattern of policy-making adjusting itself gradually to the problems encountered during the implementation process. Changes occur in policies not because underlying assumptions and values shift, but because proposed measures and instruments to tackle defined problems prove insufficient. Instead of applying lessons gained from earlier experiments to new initiatives, Turkey tends to try out new mechanisms. This disjointed pattern of political engagement with sustainability, relying on mechanisms which lack clear linkages, indicates that Turkey is "still muddling, not yet through" (Lindblom, 1979).

6. Conclusion

Sustainable development is an overarching goal that requires sustained and concerted effort by all sectors of society. As a knowledge-intensive and experimental field of policy, it is best realized by acting on the new knowledge and lessons drawn from previous experience. Therefore, learning is of great importance to this iterative process. Sustainability planning may serve as a catalyst for political learning. Moreover, as a dynamic and evolving field of policy, sustainable development further needs policy-learning to take place not just within countries, but also between countries. In this sense, innovative experiments with sustainability planning can provide lessons for other countries to draw upon in their own initiatives.

The experiences of the two countries examined here suggest that lesson-drawing would be one of the potential sources of learning for sustainable development policies. As one of the early initiatives, the evolution of the British national sustainable development planning system would be a case for inspiration for Turkey. Especially, the institutional arrangements and instruments aimed at cross-sectoral policy coordination and integration, some of which are innovative, can be adapted to sustainable development policy making in Turkey. But, as seen above, the major problem of sustainability politics in Turkey is the mode of political engagement with the concept. Characterized by the occasional periods of heightened activity motivated mostly by external dynamics, this mode prevents Turkey from establishing sustainable development firmly on the political agenda and implementing policies formulated through various plans. Additionally, the plans guiding policies aimed at sustainability lack instruments to assess progress against objectives. The UK's planning approach, with its annual review process, has been functional in both keeping sustainability on the agenda and assessing the progress against objectives set in the strategy. This allows us to suggest that the British approach presents a valuable experience in reorienting national planning efforts for sustainable development in Turkey.

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