

Environmental policy – the outcome of strategic action and institutional characteristics

Kenneth Hanf and Alf-Inge Jansen

Protecting the environment – a challenge for governance

This book is intended to provide an overview of developments in the area of environmental politics, policy and administration in a selection of ten Western European countries: Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom. In the light of the growing importance of the European Union for what both its members and other countries do in this field, a chapter on the EU has also been included. The range of countries covered, representing as they do different stages of development in environmental policy as well as different state and institutional traditions, provides an interesting opportunity to examine how different countries, which confront roughly similar types of environmental problems, have responded politically and (re)organised their administrative systems for carrying out these policies. These developments will be illuminated in a comparative perspective, and various country-specific as well as more general characteristics will be discussed.

Around 1970 the environment had been established as a political category in most Western European societies. Thereby various issues (e.g. nature protection, pollution, cultural heritage) came to be categorised and redefined as issues pertaining to the environment. A new policy field, that of environmental policy, was established.¹

The time of birth and establishment as well as the extension of the environmental policy field has varied between countries in Western Europe, but from around 1970 there has in general been a continuous public debate on how to create institutional arrangements for making and implementing policies that reflect and go along with, not against, the holism of nature and the wholeness of the environment.

A significant impetus to this ongoing debate was given by the World Commission on Environment and Development. The Commission emphasised that if we are to deal effectively with the environmental challenge, we will

M.Sc. Environmental Conservation

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2. What are the fundamental aims of this book? (In pairs)
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5. Class discussion

need to follow a policy strategy that co-ordinates and integrates the efforts to combat environmental degradation, and notably a policy strategy that integrates environmental policy and economic policy.

Authorities in Western European countries have publicly seconded this way of seeing the challenge and defining the overriding problem. Notions of sustainable development have at various levels of government been taken on board as the official framework, or strategic objective of the efforts of both economic development and environmental protection. Likewise, with its Fifth Action Programme, the European Union has officially declared that its environmental policy is on 'the way towards sustainability'.

In a number of countries, the government, with reference to various terms of 'sustainability', has argued that new policy instruments and administrative procedures should be applied. Moreover, it is argued that new divisions of labour and authority between levels of government and among different agencies as well as between these governmental actors and societal actors (e.g. firms and interest organisations, media organisations) should be put into operation. By means of such changes, policies are said to be less sectoral and more integrative as well as able to be guided by a multi-media strategy.

However, words differ from deeds. Observations from many countries indicate that in practice there is considerable variation in the manner, area and extent to which such changes take place, and that this variation seems to be dependent on environmental and institutional features specific to a given country. In this connection it should be pointed out that environmental policy is obviously just one of many policy fields in which government is called upon to act. Although commitment to environmental quality has been officially stated by a country's government and even appears firmly anchored in the social value system of the country, shifting economic conditions and balance of political support and opposition can turn it into an empty gesture when it comes to shaping policies that are implemented. A general commitment to these objectives is 'costless' compared to the difficult choices to be faced in operationalizing them in the form of concrete decisions through which the balance between economic development and environmental quality is to be struck. It is through the political process that the general commitment is tested, e.g. in concrete cases where the alternatives are either to choose short-term or immediate pain caused by environmentally sound but economically painful decisions, or to sacrifice long-term environmental benefits for more quickly realised and visible economic pay-off.

The need to confront increasingly serious national and transboundary problems of environmental deterioration occurs at a time when societies and their political leaders are being pressed to make difficult and painful decisions to adjust their post-war welfare states to what appear to be new realities. A substantive and organisational re-calibration of the welfare state has been placed on the agenda, and a re-examination of the relation between the state and society, and the role that government can be expected to play (or should play) in providing solutions to societal problems, has followed. Taken

together these developments have, for instance, in many countries changed the relationship between government regulators and business, and are reshaping the way in which governments go about defining and implementing environmental quality objectives. Furthermore, the relationships between central and sub-national governmental actors, for instance municipalities, have also been the object of substantial change.

As if these changes were not enough, in one arena after another it has become apparent that the satisfaction of domestically generated demands is impossible without co-operation with other national governments in a variety of international arenas. For a number of countries the impact of the environmental policy of the European Union has been most immediately relevant for many aspects of the governance of environmental quality.

Throughout Western Europe the debate about, and increasingly the practice of, this general reorganising and restructuring of the familiar institutional arrangements and processes of the welfare state can be characterised by such terms as: decentralisation, deregulation, privatisation, rehabilitation of the market etc. Consequently, institutional changes and the shift in paradigm to a more preventive policy in the service of environmental policy, while primarily generated by developments specific to the environmental policy field itself, have occurred in the context of and, indeed, have reflected the changes underway in the broader institutional and political system.

In line with the above we view environmental policy as embedded in a system of governance characteristic of the country in question. Therefore, we believe that environmental policy, concerned either with specifically combating pollution, or more generally with promoting good environmental quality, must contend with demands made on limited societal and political resources by other problems and policy fields. We also assume that the processes of change that we have described will be filtered through and shaped by the particular problem agendas, political forces and institutional arrangements of a given country. Indeed, how these 'new imperatives' are perceived, translated into policy strategies and converted into policies that are implemented will vary according to features of governance of the country.

The core of governance has to do with determining what ends and values should be chosen and the means by which those ends and values should be pursued, i.e. the direction of the social unit, e.g. society, community or organisation. Governance includes activities such as efforts to influence the social construction of shared beliefs about reality; the creation of identities and institutions (Therborn 1991); the allocation and regulation of rights and obligations among interested parties; and the distribution of economic means and welfare services. Governance, in other words, is the shaping and sustaining of the arrangements of authority and power within which actors make decisions and frame policies that are binding on individual and collective actors within different territorial bounds, such as those of the state, county and municipality. In this book we shall focus on how these ten Western

European countries have responded to the environmental imperatives in terms of governance.

Institutions and the infusion of values into societal and state activities

There are a number of ways of conceptualising relationships of authority and power. These different conceptions and their related principles of organisation permit recourse to different forms of governance in constituting human societies (Ostrom 1986:111). In most Western European societies the state-centred mode of governance has been seen as representing the dominant tradition of governance. However, in spite of their common features, states differ, and, as we understand it, they differ primarily because their institutional characteristics differ. We shall in the following, therefore, state how we view institutions and their significance for social activities generally and for the development of the state and state-society relations specifically.

Institutions are here conceived as both patterns of human activity and symbolic systems, cognitive constructions and normative rules through which actors categorise that activity and infuse it with meaning and value (Friedland and Alford 1991:232). Central institutions in current Western European societies are the nuclear family, Christian religion, representative democracy and the market economy. These institutions all have their distinctive symbolic systems, categories, beliefs, norms and values, which actors take for granted and draw upon when conducting certain activities. For example, when participating in elections in democracies, individuals must possess concepts of citizenship, elections, the party system, etc., and when acting as citizens they tend to vote according to what they think is right for the community – according to the social values they believe should be the community's or the nation's. In the same manner, when buying in a market, an individual has to have concepts of buyers and sellers, of price and contract, and as a buyer, or consumer, he or she tends to calculate and act according to his or her own preferences. In these two contexts, individuals tend to act in accordance with two different logics, the logic of representative democracy and that of the market, and the logic inherent in these sets of relationships is institution specific. The rules that constitute what is meaningful and what modes of social conduct are to be sanctioned differ according to institutions. Therefore, behaviour appropriate in one institutional setting would be inappropriate in another.

These examples illustrate a basic point: as actors draw on different institutions when conducting various types of activities, the various activities are infused with the values of and regulated by different institutional logics. Characteristically, therefore, some of the most important struggles between interest groups and organisations are over the appropriate relationships between institutions, over the institutional logic by which the various social

activities should be regulated and over categories of persons to which they should apply (Friedland and Alford 1991:256)

History has taught us that institutions often are transformed incrementally and peacefully, but when important institutional changes take place, they often do so rapidly and are usually contested. It took centuries before institutions like the nuclear family, Christian religion, the state and the market economy were established as central institutions. In many parts of Europe this institutionalisation took place through conflicts, even wars. The nation state emerged as the solution of the crisis of the medieval order and the product of the confessional wars. The characteristic of the state was sovereignty, i.e. the exclusive right of the ruler to give laws to everybody in general and in particular without being bound by any positive law himself (Grimm 1986:92). The state even had right to use 'swords' to enforce these laws. This sovereignty appeared as a property of the monarch and was administered by personal servants. The post-medieval community was divided into state (the monarch and his men) and society (comprising everybody else in the role as private members and subject to the sovereign power of the state).

State-society relations were crucially transformed during the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In some countries rights concerning individual freedom which were associated with civil society (e.g. freedom of speech, the right to own property and to conclude valid contracts and right to justice) were established during the eighteenth and the first decades of the nineteenth century. The liberal state of the nineteenth century, which succeeded the absolutist monarchies, reduced the functions and the rank of the state. The liberal assumption was that social justice and economic welfare were best produced by individual freedom. Mercantilistic and other measures of regulating production and trade of private goods were banished and were, like social regulation in general, to be left to the market mechanism (Grimm 1986:102). In German territories where the bourgeoisie did not win any significant influence on the domain of the state, compensation was sought by a particular emphasis on rule by law (the *Rechtsstaat*). Institutional characteristics of the *Rechtsstaat* emerged in a majority of the ten countries focused upon in this book, and administrative apparatuses were further developed towards the standard Weberian model of bureaucracy predominantly staffed by lawyers. The establishment of *civil rights* represented the emergence of the status of citizenship, which was instrumental in providing the legal and moral bulwark for the emergence of contract as the primary basis of economic organisation, i.e. allowing market forces to govern the movement of labour, land, goods and capital. While this first distinct step in the emergence of citizenship represented an institutional differentiation within the state, it simultaneously was complementary to, resultant from and instrumental in the further institutionalisation of the market economy (Marshall 1964:87ff.; King and Waldron 1988:418–421). The development of the institutional characteristics of the state were related to the development of those of market economy.

A new phase of increased state activity occurred during the last part of the nineteenth century, when the state in most of these ten countries became increasingly involved in the technical and economical modernisation of society. The state recruited officials from new professions (e.g. engineers, agronomists, medical doctors) and set up administrative units (central agencies) that were organised to apply symbolic systems and practices more tied to the logics of substantive consequence than to that of law and rule following (Eckhoff and Jacobsen 1960; Jacobsen 1970; Fischer and Lundgren 1975; Burrage 1992 and March and Olsen 1995:154–155). This meant that from now on the state administrative apparatus included distinctly different types of organisations that were infused with values from and constrained in their action according to different and partly contradictory institutions.

During the same period, crucial steps in the transformation of the institution of citizenship were also taken. From primarily being *state subjects* with limited *civil rights*, citizens gradually became participants in the governing of the state. The core element of this process was the establishing of political citizenship. That meant that, in addition to established civil rights, *political rights* (right to vote and be eligible as representatives in legislative bodies) and structures of competitive mass politics in representative democracies (e.g. electoral laws, party systems, mass media) were created. From this time onwards it was not enough that state activity was conducted according to the letter of the law and was technically effective, it had also to be accepted by a majority of the citizens, or at least by a majority of their elected representatives in the parliament. The institution of representative democracy was incorporated into the institutional order of the state.

A crucial next stage in the institutional development of the state and also in state – society relations took place as the experience of economic *laissez-faire* and the consequences of industrial capitalism provoked the return of state intervention in society. The typical pattern of development in a majority of these countries was that the state in the last half of the nineteenth century adopted legislative and controlling measures to restrict *laissez-faire* and to protect the weaker members of society, e.g. in the field of labour relations, social security and consumer and competitor protection (Grimm 1986:103). This transfer of competence from the market system to the state was speeded up to dampen the economic and social crisis between the two World Wars and was institutionalised in the post-World War II era as the welfare state. New social rights (e.g. sickness and unemployment benefit, retirement pensions, equal rights to health care and education) may be seen as instruments aimed at rectifying social degradation and insecurity inherent in the capitalist market economy, and a transfer of responsibilities from the private sphere to the public sphere (Eriksen 1996:61). The adoption of the welfare state implied that new relations between citizens and between citizens and state were established; i.e. new *social rights* as well as new social obligations were institutionalised.² By providing minimum standards in these areas, the state offsets the vagaries of market processes

and corrects the gross inequalities of distribution arising from the market (King and Waldron 1988:419). The institutionalisation of this extension of citizenship made the role of the citizen irrevocably distinct from the role of the consumer.

In this sketch we have noted how various types of social activities are infused with different values and are regulated by different institutional logics. In fact, society can be conceived as constituted through multiple institutional logics (Friedland and Alford 1991:243), and we see the institutional structure of societies, like those of the ten countries examined in this book, primarily as the historical result of the strategies pursued and power exerted by various interest groups and organisations.³ The interrelated development of, particularly, two institutional orders, that of the state and that of the market economy, has been pointed out. More specifically, we have taken note of how different institutions with their distinctive logics have historically been incorporated into the institutional order of the state. The current state appears to be constituted through a number of institutional logics. Some of these, such as those of military and law and order enforcing institutions of the early states, socio-economic modernisation institutions and various types of rights constituting the core of values and practices of citizenship, mass democracy and the welfare state, are potentially contradictory. A crucial governmental task is to balance and co-ordinate the organisations that in terms of public policies give expression to and reflect these different institutions in ways which make the activities of these organisations more compatible with and conducive to the requirements of collective well-being (Offe and Preuss 1991:145).

All ten of the states on which we focus have incorporated these different institutional logics, but the developmental pattern of this incorporation differs. The time at which and the extent to which the liberal state was established and the capitalistic market economy grew, the way and degree to which the state became involved in the modernisation of society and the time at which and manner in which critical steps in the development and structuring of competitive mass politics were taken (Rokkan 1970:72–144), as well as the degree to which social rights were established, have varied.

Also other types of country-specific institutional features have developed in these countries. For instance, there are unitary states and federal states (among the former ones, France developed as more centralised than the Netherlands and Norway), and there are significant differences between these states as to the extent of parliamentarism and other types of representative and responsive government as well as to the degree to which a democracy is characterised by corporatively structured bargaining democracy (Rokkan 1976). Similarly there is a strong emphasis on constitutionalism in the conduct of government and a concomitant formal and legalistically oriented policy process in a country like Germany (Katzenstein 1987:382–384), while in Britain policy traditionally has been conceived as a series of problems and thus constituting cases that should be judged on their own merits, i.e. the particular has preference over the general, the commonsensical over the principled (Weale 1992:81). Moreover, while there are widely established

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In this sketch we have noted how various types of social activities are infused with different values and are regulated by different institutional logics. In fact, society can be conceived as constituted through multiple institutional logics (Friedland and Alford 1991:243), and we see the institutional structure of societies, like those of the ten countries examined in this book, primarily as the historical result of the strategies pursued and power exerted by various interest groups and organisations.³ The interrelated development of, particularly, two institutional orders, that of the state and that of the market economy, has been pointed out. More specifically, we have taken note of how different institutions with their distinctive logics have historically been incorporated into the institutional order of the state. The current state appears to be constituted through a number of institutional logics. Some of these, such as those of military and law and order enforcing institutions of the early states, socio-economic modernisation institutions and various types of rights constituting the core of values and practices of citizenship, mass democracy and the welfare state, are potentially contradictory. A crucial governmental task is to balance and co-ordinate the organisations that in terms of public policies give expression to and reflect these different institutions in ways which make the activities of these organisations more compatible with and conducive to the requirements of collective well-being (Offe and Preuss 1991:145).

All ten of the states on which we focus have incorporated these different institutional logics, but the developmental pattern of this incorporation differs. The time at which and the extent to which the liberal state was established and the capitalistic market economy grew, the way and degree to which the state became involved in the modernisation of society and the time at which and manner in which critical steps in the development and structuring of competitive mass politics were taken (Rokkam 1970:72–144), as well as the degree to which social rights were established, have varied.

Also other types of country-specific institutional features have developed in these countries. For instance, there are unitary states and federal states (among the former ones, France developed as more centralised than the Netherlands and Norway), and there are significant differences between these states as to the extent of parliamentarism and other types of representative and responsive government as well as to the degree to which a democracy is characterised by corporatively structured bargaining democracy (Rokkam 1976). Similarly there is a strong emphasis on constitutionalism in the conduct of government and a concomitant formal and legalistically oriented policy process in a country like Germany (Katzenstein 1987:382–384), while in Britain policy traditionally has been conceived as a series of problems and thus constituting cases that should be judged on their own merits, i.e. the particular has preference over the general, the commonsensical over the principled (Weale 1992:81). Moreover, while there are widely established

consensus-making routines both at the national level and at the sectoral level in Germany, the Netherlands and the Nordic countries, such institutions have been weak or almost non-existent in Spain and Italy.

We expect to find that variation in how these ten Western European societies have responded to the environmental challenge, in terms of policy content (environmental goals and values) and of instruments and measures as well as in terms of organisation for making and implementing environmental policy, significantly reflects institutional characteristics as well as strategic action by individuals, interest groups and organisations specific to the different countries.

Institutions, organisations and strategic action

In the ten countries examined in this book environmental policy has developed as an identifiable policy sector with its own characteristic processes and structures of governance. Our focus is primarily on the organisation of practices for environmental policy making and administration and the arrangements of power and authority as well as values and perceptions of problems and solutions represented by this organisation. Since organisations take centre stage in our analysis, we will state how we view organisations and how they here will be seen as related to institutions and strategic action.

One of our basic assumptions is that organisations are mobilisers of resources for the attainment of goals and the pursuit of values. We further assume that it is equally characteristic of organisations that they promote only some goals and some interests, and not all. By organising, a division of labour and also of rights and obligations is established, along with corresponding expectations as to what are correct and reasonable decisions and policies as well as proper procedures and rules of the game. Concurrently some actors and some points of view are defined in, while others are defined out. Some lines of conflict are defined as important, while others are regarded as peripheral or irrelevant.

This characteristic of organisation is generally referred to as an organisation's mobilisation of bias.⁴ In many cases the mobilisation of bias can be seen as predominantly the result of calculation and planning, i.e. the organisation functions as an instrument designed to achieve specified goals. However, the development of tasks and division of labour, the distribution of rights and obligations, authority and responsibility, stable expectations and patterns of proper procedures of action and rules of the game as well as patterns of interest and conflict are developed by informal as well as formal organisation, and they are established over time. As stated by Philip Selznick almost 50 years ago, goals and procedures therefore tend to achieve an established, value-impregnated status (Selznick 1949:257). In general, organisations tend to be infused with values beyond the instrumental or technical requirements of the task at hand (Selznick 1957:16–17). This characteristic constitutes the core aspect of the institutional character of an organisation. We

take it that the organisation of the environmental policy sector as a whole or the organisations that are parts of this policy sector, as the result of design and institutionalisation, represent and promote specific goals and values as well as perceptions of problems and (of their) solutions, and that they in this manner represent institutional logics that are more or less compatible.

It is useful to distinguish between institutions and organisations. While we conceive of institutions as both symbolic systems and patterns of human activity, we here focus on organisations as actors, such as individuals and groups, that draw on institutions to categorise and order reality as well as infuse their action with meaning and values. In this way institutions shape social action. On the other hand, when organisations, groups and individuals as actors are drawing on institutions, they confirm and sustain these very institutions. By reproducing the institutions in this way, actors also reproduce the conditions that make such action possible. In other words: institutions are both medium and outcome of the action of organisations, groups and individuals (Giddens 1984:16–25).

This particular focus on what we have pointed out as characteristics of institutions follows from our assumption that these characteristics are crucial because they shape action by limiting what is perceived by actors as available future options (Krasner 1988:71). We take it that state institutions, the values, understandings and ways of action taken for granted, which these institutions represent, will be the principal influences on how the state and its component parts function in terms of environmental politics, policy and administration. However, individual, organisational and group action, institutionally shaped as it may be, is the engine that drives political life. The relation of authority and power is, therefore, not pre-determined; people can always 'act otherwise' (Lukes 1977:6). Actors are not determined; actors can make a difference (Giddens 1982:30). Consequently, we find it necessary to focus also on characteristics of environmental politics, i.e. the activities through which environmental problems are defined and accepted as tasks to be dealt with by the authorities and also through which public resources (financial, organisational, authority) are assigned to solve these problems. In sum: we assume that the practice of a country's policy system is the outcome of the interaction between the strategic activities of the various actors and the institutional structure within which they act.

A framework for comparative analysis of environmental policy

What is presented in the following ten chapters is not simply a description of formal institutions and processes found in each country. We were interested in the extent to which and the ways in which these institutional arrangements, and the environmental policies they 'produce', are similar or different. The following chapters map the distinctiveness of each of the ten countries as well as provide data to be used in the concluding chapter.

Each chapter begins with a short overview of some of the salient socio-economic and geographical features of the country as a lead-in to a description of the type of environmental problems with which the country has been confronted. This brief examination of some features of the country: its geographical location, exposure to imported pollution, peculiar ecological features influencing its vulnerability to environmental damage, its socio-economic structure (e.g. degree of industrialisation/farming/tourism, urbanisation/concentration of population), gives a general idea of the type of environmental stresses or pressure to which the country (or particular parts of it) is exposed and to which its policy process would have to respond. Such a description also suggests the kinds of social and economic interests that are likely to be affected by these problems and the environmental policy measures that are applied. This in turn suggests something of the socio-economic configuration of support or opposition to environmental measures.

It is assumed that both the relevance of environmental quality issues and the agenda of specific problems facing the country, will be, in some way, related to characteristics like those mentioned above. However, problems are not phenomena 'out there'. Problems are perceived and constructed by somebody as a discrepancy between what is (or would be) the desirable and the existing state of affairs. We assume that whether or not environmental problems are translated into demands for public action, and ultimately into a supply of appropriate policy measures for meeting these demands, will be an outcome of the interaction between the strategies of the various actors and the institutional structure of the politico-administrative system of the country. In this sense it is clear that there is no necessary relation between environmental conditions and environmental policy. Still it is important to note that the geographical location and features of the country and its socio-economic structure, combined with the peculiar set of relevant public policies, will have important consequences for the condition of the environment and, as filtered through the political process, for the agenda and activities of environmental policy.

In this sense, therefore, 'environmental problems' and 'environmental policy' are themselves clearly products of the political process. Countries will vary among themselves and over time as to what is considered to be an 'environmental problem' as well as with respect to what should be done, and by whom, about it. For this reason each country chapter traces the emergence and changing dimensions of the 'environmental problem' as an object of social concern and political action. Consequently, the description of the overall situation in a country with regard to factors relevant for the determination of the quality of its environment is followed by a brief historical sketch of the development of public awareness of and action with regard to environmental problems, including an examination of the societal actors who have contributed to the shaping of environmental politics in the country. This overview addresses such questions as: What kinds of issues emerged or were promoted by which type of societal (or governmental) actors or

groups? What were the initial responses to these concerns or demands for action? How have things been changing (especially with the advent of 'modern environmentalism' in the sixties, or whenever that happened in a given country)? In order to answer these questions regarding the dynamics of institutional and policy development, each author was asked to describe, in broad lines, the interweaving of institutions, problem perceptions and definitions, and policy measures over time.

Another set of questions has to do with the 'politics' of environmental policy and administration more narrowly defined. Changes in and operations of institutional arrangements do not take place in a disembodied manner without support or stimulation (as well as opposition) from particular (coalitions of) actors seeking to promote their particular interests. For this reason we were interested in learning: Who have been the carriers or generators of institutional and policy changes? How have they attempted to influence the direction of policy change? How does (or has) the constellation of political forces differed from one level of government to another or with respect to different aspects of environmental policy? Also, in this connection, where and in what way has the balance been struck between economic considerations (development) and environmental quality? Has there been a move towards a policy strategy aiming at pollution prevention and integrated pollution control? What are the relationships between environmental policy (and its institutional champions) and other policy fields and their supporting actors?

Public policy is in this book viewed as the course of action taken by government over time to deal with a particular societal problem. As such it can be described along three dimensions: intentions, commitments of resources and operational activities.

The intentions of public authorities in attempting to deal with environmental problems can be discerned, in the first instance, in the general policy strategy of the national government. Such an environmental policy strategy would contain definitions of the problems, identification of causes of these problems, selection of the appropriate approach for dealing with them and the choice of instruments most likely to bring about the quality objectives pursued. Such a policy strategy would also contain assumptions regarding the relation between environmental protection and economic development. Of particular interest in this connection would be to know to what extent a given country is committed to a policy of sustainable development and in what way this commitment has been translated into measures designed to achieve this goal.

An analysis of policy along the two dimensions of resources committed and daily operations would reveal how this national policy strategy in a given country has been put into actual practice. In this regard, the authors were asked to examine the organisational arrangements that have been developed, and the procedures that are followed, as well as to consider types of resources committed to the realisation of policy objectives. Such an examination of the structural and processual characteristics of the environmental policy

system helps us understand why policy has developed the way it has in a particular country. A look at the procedures used for applying the different policy instruments suggests the kinds of opportunities available for the interested parties to enter the decision process as ally or opponent of the different policy objectives. In this way an indication can be given for the constellation of political forces surrounding the actors responsible for performing the various policy functions.

Against the backdrop of the national environmental situation and its policies for handling environmental problems, each chapter proceeds by looking at the main features of the country's environmental administration. This section of the national chapters provides a summary of the formal institutional arrangements for formulating and carrying out environmental policy. These summaries of the overall division of labour and functions between different governmental actors begin with a description of the jurisdiction and powers of the administrative actors primarily responsible for environmental policy at the different governmental levels. Here, too, an effort is made to give some indication of the relative 'political weight' these environmental actors have in the overall policy scheme of things.

Of course, decisions regarding how the environmental administration of a country is to be organised and the way in which its decisions are to be made are not made in a vacuum. The already existing organisation of the political system, with its mobilisation of prevailing bias, will provide a (limiting) framework within which institutional arrangements for a 'new' policy sector are shaped. Therefore, the initial development of an environmental policy system is placed in the context of the more general politico-administrative system; traditional ways of organising and doing things, out of which these new policy structures emerge.

Although the chapters thus give an overview of the institutional arrangements on national, provincial and municipal levels, the authors were requested to pay particular attention to the linkages between these levels of action. Interesting in this regard is the ways in which the pattern of inter-relationships between centre and periphery (national and sub-national actors) works to constrain or define the set of action possibilities within which individual actors operate and work together with other actors.

As noted above, national governments are increasingly forced to operate in pursuit of national policy objectives in a broader context of international co-operation and the obligations they have taken upon themselves as signatories to various international environmental agreements. Such international commitments can function both as a set of constraints upon national policy and as a set of opportunities for achieving environmental quality objectives that would otherwise be beyond the capacity of any given country acting alone. Most obviously, international environmental agreements require adjustments in the substance of policy measures formulated and implemented by a country.

The effects of decisions and policies by a supranational organisation like the European Union are without precedence in Western European history.

The environmental directives of the European Union must be translated into appropriate legal measures by each of the member states. The importance of European policy for the distribution of costs and benefits within a member state affects the nature of political conflict surrounding environmental issues, i.e. decision-making with regard to such European Union policy can mobilise groups and redirect old participants, leading to new coalitions and shifting patterns of political activity at both the national and European levels. Furthermore, European Union policies can lead to pressures for change in the institutional arrangements and policy activities of particular countries. Therefore, in each of the country studies, some attention is paid to the impact of the EU's environmental policy upon domestic developments. Moreover, as has been mentioned, we have included a chapter (chapter 12) which examines the development of EU policy and the institutional arrangements through which this is shaped. In structure this chapter is similar to the country chapters.

While such a general overview is indispensable to our understanding of how environmental policy is administered, the story would be grossly incomplete without paying particular attention to how this system works in practice. By looking at how the different parts of the system (described above) are 'put together' in the daily operations of carrying out general policy and its programmes in concrete cases, it is possible to follow the way in which policy 'moves' from one level of decision-making to another (a process which can, of course, move in both directions) and how the different actors interact with one another.

Of particular interest in this connection is the role of local authorities in implementing national policies, and the network of inter-relations joining them with national policy makers. While we assume that the key 'bottom line' pay-offs are produced at the local level, this does not mean that we expect local officials (or local representatives of any level of government) to determine these results all by themselves. Rather it is assumed that these outputs are joint products of the interactions between different governmental actors, and between public officials and private actors. Nevertheless, in some of the ten countries under investigation the local level of government has been acquiring an increasing importance. In each chapter the emerging role of local communities in the system of environmental policy and administration is described and discussed.

An overview

This rest of the book is divided into 12 chapters. There are ten country chapters, a chapter on the European Union, and a concluding chapter in which an attempt is made to compare and discuss the developments and experiences of the ten countries in terms of some of the questions raised earlier.

The material presented in the following country studies will, it is hoped, enable the reader to follow the general line of development in each country with regard to environmental politics, policy and administration. At the

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same time the presentation has been organised in a way so as to lay the basis for a comparison of the different national institutional responses to the range of environmental problems confronting countries at a roughly similar level of social and economic development.

The analytical framework developed in the preceding section represents a 'maximum programme' for the effort that started with an international meeting at Drøbak in Norway. Since then the initial analytical framework has been developed further to guide the other authors in their revisions of their chapters. Although we were interested in comparing the experiences in different countries, we did not try to impose particular concepts and developments on the national self-understandings. Our approach was not intended to meet the requirements, and therefore we could not utilise the advantages, of the cross-national aggregate analysis mode. A basic methodological concern has been to let each country 'speak for itself' in order to see if, and in what way, a number of issues, that are either analytically interesting or indeed visible in certain countries, are in fact taking place in a particular country. The approach we have used in terms of guidelines and stimuli given to authors of the country chapters was aimed at ensuring that each chapter contained country-specific information that was presented in terms of a common set of analytical categories. The result is a set of case studies where, while each tells its own story, there is also substantial commonality and consistency in presentation to allow suggestive comparisons among the countries.⁵ Needless to say, the case chapters do not provide sufficient information to shed light on all the relevant developments that have occurred in environmental policy. Nor can we in any systematic way answer all the questions we have raised in our framework.

The concluding chapter is a synthesis of developments of environmental politics and policy in Western Europe in which we differentiate between cross-country developments and country-specific characteristics. As to the latter, we try to show how environmental politics and governmental response in terms of policy and implementation measures as well as of environmental policy organisation in each of these countries have been shaped by the interaction of institutional features and actors' interests and strategies. Moreover, we examine how the environmentalist conceptualisation of the environmental *problématique* was reconstructed and transformed into the policy strategy of ecological modernisation. We give an overview of how this policy strategy has been put into practice, and we discuss how the development of environmental politics and policy is related to developments in other policy fields and to the effort to restructure the relation between the different institutional orders of these societies.

Notes

1. We use the concept of environmental policy area to refer to a subclass of the environmental policy field, e.g. issues pertaining to air pollution constitute one such environmental policy area, issues pertaining to nature protection would be another. By the concept of environmental policy sector we refer to the actors that try to affect public policy on environmental issues, the pattern of interaction among these actors as well as their substantive environmental position (e.g. the environmental values and policy positions they promote and represent).
2. With the establishing of social rights we can, in the words of T.H. Marshall, speak of the historical development of three layers of citizenship rights; the first layer comprised civil rights, the second layer political rights and from the pre- and post-World War II era there is a third layer of social rights, 'the whole range from the right to a modicum of economic welfare and security to the right to share the full in the social heritage and to live the life of a civilised being according to the standards prevailing in the society.' (Marshall 1964:72).
3. It follows from the institutional perspective that this structure in turn differentially affects the power, political consciousness and strategies of these social groups (Alford & Friedland 1974:326).
4. Nowhere is this more succinctly expressed than in Schattschneider's epigrammatic formulation: 'Organisation is itself a mobilisation of bias in preparation for action' (Schattschneider 1960:30).
5. Our approach was partly inspired by arguments made by F.G. Castles (1989:1-14).

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