

This is a draft pre-publication of article that was published in its final version online with *European Planning Studies* (ISSN 1469-5944), 13 June 2013. DOI 10.1080/09654313.2013.806433

Discourse Yes, Implementation Maybe: an Immobility and Paralysis of Sustainable Development Policy

Dr. Constance Carr
Research Associate
Institute of Geography and Spatial Planning
University of Luxembourg
Luxembourg
constance.carr@uni.lu
(Tel) 00352 466644 9752

Abstract

Sustainable development policies are on the move. Cities the world over are repositioning, repackaging and remarketing themselves as green and sustainable, and sustainable development is the moniker imported to spark the process. At the same time, sustainable development, as a normative point of departure, is itself going through cycles of reinterpretation and re-composition. The research in this paper aims to understand this process by mapping the trajectories of sustainable development policies, and understanding sustainable development as a contextually grounded policy in motion. In Luxembourg, as planners are confronted with finding ways to manage growth, sustainable development has come to permeate all levels of the planning system. To understand how this came into being, research methods were employed that include document screening and a series of conversational interviews that were later transcribed and coded. In so doing, the discourse around sustainable development policy could be reconstructed and analysed. The results showed that the multi-scalar, cross-national, and simultaneously micro-level governance structures pose many obstructions to the implementation of sustainable development policies that are imported from abroad. Thus, policy is ultimately immobile, and a policy paralysis can be spoken of.

Keywords: policy mobility, sustainable development, urban studies, governance

1. Introduction

Sustainable development policies are on the move. Cities the world over are repositioning, repackaging and remarketing themselves as green and sustainable, and sustainable development is the moniker imported to spark the process. At the same time, sustainable development, as a normative point of departure, is itself going through cycles of reinterpretation and re-composition. This paper explores the policy field of sustainability and urban transformation in Luxembourg, and seeks to understand processes of policy realization (or lack thereof) conceptualized through policy mobility. The research presented in this paper thus sits at the nexus of three wider scholarly discourses that are explained in the following subsections: 1) contextually grounded policy transfer or policy mobility; 2) sustainable development as a normative planning and policy model on the move; and 3) urban and regional planning and governance in Luxembourg.

1.1 Policy Mobility and Urban Spaces

This paper hopes to respond to literature on policy mobility recently developed by scholars such as González (2011), Temenos and McCann (2012) and Ward (2006; 2010). Together, scholars of policy mobility have contributed to a body of literature that examines how policy ideas travel globally and imprint themselves asynchronously across territories that, by other means of measurement, appear disconnected. González (2011) examined the policy tourism of the Barcelona Model and the Bilbao effect, and the phenomenon of their international and selective diffusion. McCann and Ward (2010) examined the emergence of entrepreneurial urban governance arrangements in the UK, with particular focus on the emergence of Business Improvement Districts and New Urbanism as innovations in local governance and planning. Temenos and McCann (2012) traced the mobility of sustainability policy in Whistler, and showed how various actor assemblages constructed:

“...a spatially and historically contingent organization of economic interests, institutional capacities, and political positions that allow development to proceed despite economic and ecological crises and, in the face of growing popular concerns about, the state of the environment,” (Temenos & McCann, 2012, p. 1390).

The importation of policies and practices allowed local actor coalitions to identify problems, propose a certain range of actions, and most importantly, maintain consensus over a certain mode of development. This was key to the “sustainability fix” (Temenos & McCann, 2012).

This emerging body of literature constitutes an important contribution to urban studies in at least four ways. First, as these authors observe the negative effects and expansion of territorially unbounded capitalism, they can target and critically analyze the neoliberal policy agendas and strategies that are being imprinted around the globe. Second, as McCann and Ward (2010) argue, this work moves beyond traditional literature on policy transfer by: (a) recognizing discourse as contextually grounded; and (b) examining the scales of discourse and policy production, the mechanisms through which policies shift and change as they move and the power dynamics that characterize the process. Third, this work offers new insights into how the immense diversity of cities

and/or urban and regional spaces are interlinked and interconnected with one another. This “comparative turn” as we see in Robison’s (2011) work, aims at ways of understanding urban spaces as constitutive of and by their relations with each other, while transcending the boundaries that are implicit in notions of cities as distinct and incommensurate. Fourth, the concept of policy mobility also maps nicely onto deeper and much older philosophical conceptions of discourse and space; specifically, the materiality and spatiality of discourse.

McCann and Ward (2010) explained:

“...The policy world seems to be in constant motion. In a figurative sense, policy-makers seem to be under increasing pressure to ‘get a move on’ – to keep up with the latest trends and ‘hot’ ideas that sweep into their offices, to convert those ideas into locally appropriate ‘solutions,’ and ‘roll them out’ [...] Contemporary policy-making, at all scales, therefore involves the constant ‘scanning’ of the policy landscape, via professional publications and reports, the media, websites, blogs, professional contacts, and word of mouth for ready-made, off-the-shelf policies and best practices that can be quickly applied locally. It is in this context of ‘fast policy transfer’ (Peck & Theodore, 2001, p. 429) that figurative motion in the policy world becomes literal motion,” (McCann & Ward, 2010, p. 175).

This space of networks and flows is reminiscent of the body of post-structural discourse theory, emerging from (Butler, 2006) who rooted her work on the foundations laid by Foucault (Butler, 2006, pp. 26-32). Post-structuralism, however, has been criticized for leaning too heavily on logico-epistemological realms of discourse (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 3-4; Pratt, 2004, p. 12). Correspondingly, over the last decade or so, scholars from a variety of social scientific disciplines have taken up the challenge of locating and tracing the materiality of discourse: Space matters. For example, by looking at the role of agency and community in the production of space, Smith (2000, p. 17, p. 111, p. 145) observed that people take part in creating the urban environment and that their transnational ties are woven into the local urban fabric at very levels. Akin to Pratt’s (2004) mapping of embodied social relations in Vancouver, Smith’s (2000) urbanity was infused with knowledge and meanings produced materially in transnational networks. Massey’s (2005) vision of space was also one in which time and space could not be conceptualized as separate independent entities. To Massey (2005) everything was in motion: Individuals, groups, populations and even inanimate objects travelled around the earth on their own time-space trajectories. Nature, too, was in process (Massey, 2005, p. 130): Plants and animals come and go, the deserts expand and contract, the shorelines recede and advance, even the mountains are only passing through. Space was thus the product of a “throwtogetherness” (Massey, 2005, p. 140-142) of multiple and coeval trajectories. Everything was in motion, and matter and discourse were the products of interrelations and the possibility of multiple relations. Furthermore, the pace of transformation varies at different spatial scales and spheres of reality. While vast in scope, all of these authors share a fundamental concept of radical multiplicity. Scholars are thus challenged to search out the material ways that space and discourse are reconstituted through interconnected, hybrid and networked flows. Policy mobility can be understood

as an important contribution to this work because it maps out the material repercussions of discourses that travel via networked and embodied exchanges.

1.2 Sustainable Development Policy in Motion

As Temenos and McCann (2012) have already shown, sustainability is a policy in motion. While the concept of sustainable development existed prior (Parra & Moulaert, 2011), it was the Brundtland-Report (United Nations, 1987) that furnished it with international recognition and legitimacy. Sustainable development was defined as development that meets the needs of the present generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (United Nations, 1987, p. 54). It was a landmark document because it marked the convergence of social and environmental concerns with economic production (Parra & Moulaert, 2011). Since then, sustainability has remained on the international agenda, and has been further developed in various declarations, charters and strategies. Over the years, a wealth of attempts have been made to bring sustainability closer to reality. This is seen in the wide variety of policy documents, research reports, and scholarly literature that has since arisen (Baker, 2005; Meadowcroft, 2007; OECD, 2001, 2002).

As a normative planning objective, sustainable development prevails across European urban planning circles. Policy manifestos such as the Aalborg Commitments (ICLEI - Local Governments for Sustainability and City of Aalborg, 2004) or the more recent Leipzig Charter of Sustainable European Cities aim at defining measures towards making cities and regions sustainable. This further coincides with the emergence and acceptance of green building approaches and an increasing supply of best practices (see catalogues available from organizations such as the EUKN or ICLEI, and the overview by Berke (2008)). Freiburg im Breisgau, Vancouver, and Portland have become parade international examples of cities that have “gone green”, while at the same time, there has also been the emergence of showcase zero-carbon cities, such as Masdar and Dongtan. These cities have all underscored advancements in sustainable engineering and architectural design.

Sustainable development has frequently been the normative moniker used in conjunction with finding coherent, inclusive, workable and enduring solutions to problems associated with urban and regional transformation. There has, however, been limited success in terms of consensus building and implementation. Many examples (Jordan, 2008; Redclift, 2005) reveal that attempts to operationalize and practice convincing models of integrative sustainable development at urban and regional levels often run into various caveats and limitations. Some arise out of internal contradictions of the concept of sustainability and the contested terrain of policy-making. Others are grounded in the complex configuration of territorial development, in which structural, socio-economic and political processes collide with an array of interests. As a result, there exists a gap between the plans for, and the reality of, sustainability across the built and un-built environment.

1.3 Sustainability Immobilized in Luxembourg

The research presented here was carried out within the framework of a project (SUSTAINLUX) funded by the *Fonds National de la Recherche* (FNR) and carried out at the

University of Luxembourg's Institute of Geography and Spatial Planning. The wider research project aimed at assessing the efforts and policy instruments, in Luxembourg, with regard to their contributions to sustainability goals in spatial development. With a modest population size of approximately half a million, Luxembourg can classify as a small state (Grydehøj, 2011). However, as founding member of several European and international institutions (EU, OECD, NATO, UN), host to several institutions of the European Union (Parliament Secretariat, Court of Justice, the European Investment Bank) (Chilla, 2009), and ranked 16th among global financial centers (City of London & Z/Yen Group Limited, 2010), Luxembourg is an important node on wider networked flows.

The expansions of the finance industry and related service sector (Schulz & Walther, 2009) as well as the knowledge economy have driven significant demographic and economic transformations in Luxembourg. As a result, Luxembourg has experienced increasing numbers of cross-border commuters and corresponding transport problems, as it receives an additional 140,000 daily commuters from Germany, France and Belgium. Further, these commuters form a labour force that generates over half of the GDP. In addition, the high incomes earned in Luxembourg have driven up real estate prices, and have forced rapid land-use changes in, and fast growth of, previously rural communities. Because of the increased pressures to provide housing and infrastructure, many are now beginning to see the pressing need to coordinate further urbanization. This has largely been pursued in the name of sustainable development.

This paper examines sustainability policy and its mobility in Europe and immobility in Luxembourg. Luxembourg offers an interesting case example for such studies because it profoundly intertwined with international currents. It would thus seem an ideal hotbed of cross-national flows and exchanges of ideas and policies. As sustainable development appears as keywords on many Luxembourg policy documents, it would seem that Luxembourg too could be mapped on a web of circuits around sustainability that fastens cities attempting to go green and/or steer growth. This could enable a relational evaluation of material urban "contours" – to borrow a metaphor from Pratt (2004, p. 162). However, in contrast to the mobilizing learning curve and re-exportation of sustainability ideas that McCann and Temenos (2012) observed in Whistler – that is, the translation, readaptation, and repackaging of a new "vehicular idea" (McCann & Temenos, 2012) – the case of Luxembourg reveals a virtual policy import stop. Empirical observations of policy-making in Luxembourg thus expand upon the growing rich literature of comparative urban studies (Ward, 2010; Roy, 2009; Robinson, 2011) in surprising ways. Despite efforts to bring in policies in from abroad, despite vast discussions in and across various discursive spheres, local Luxembourg governance structures derail or prevent implementation processes. The reasons behind this de facto policy import stop can be unpacked by examining the conflicts between traditional and modern land-use management styles, the structure of government, and the political economic structure of land-use.

2. Method

The mobility of sustainability policy was examined by reconstructing the different ways in which sustainability was placed on the public agenda in Luxembourg. This involved ascertaining who pursued the sustainability agenda, determining the foundations on

which respective arguments were based, investigating the meanings that actors derived out of the concept of sustainable development and tracing the mechanisms through which sustainability policy must travel in order to achieve implementation. A three-pronged constructivist approach was thus undertaken. First, relevant policy documents in Luxembourg were collected and surveyed. These included policy guidelines developed at the international level as well as those developed domestically. Second, over 30 one-hour qualitative conversational interviews were performed with researchers (R), media analysts (MA), activists (A), home buyers (HB), and government officials (GO), lawyers (L), and architects (AT). Each interview was transcribed, archived and coded for systematic analysis. In this text, the abbreviated code names were used to refer to these interviews. Codes were also used to respect the confidentiality of the interview process. Third, context and general construction of wider discursive fields was generated through participant observation. This included attendance at meetings such as, but not limited to, the Superior Council of Spatial Planning (*Conseil Supérieur de l'Aménagement du Territoire*, CSAT), the Superior Council for Sustainable Development (*Conseil supérieur pour un développement durable*, CSDD), the University of Luxembourg's Sustainable Development Working Group, and the Partnership for the Environment and Climate (*Partenariat pour l'Environnement et le Climat*, PEC).

3. Observations of the Movers and Makers of Circulating Sustainability Policies

An overview of sustainable development policy documents in Luxembourg quickly shows a close interface linking domestic and international discourses. This was confirmed by several respondents (GO1, GO2, GO3, R1), who commented that Luxembourg was often involved in the making of international agreements concerning sustainability. As a result, international and domestic policy circuits were formed such that sustainability policies were generated and circulated by national representatives active in international forums, who then imported the ideas back to discuss them further internally.

3.1 The International Circuit

The production of local integrative sustainable development in Luxembourg was inspired by participation in international meetings (GO1, GO2, GO3, R1). These forums included the Brundtland Report, the Rio Declaration, the Vienna Convention, the Montreal and Kyoto Protocols, the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Lisbon and Gothenburg Strategies, and the Leipzig Charter. Luxembourg always sent a delegation.

This international circuit had several functions. First, participation in international forums can be understood as a strategy towards justification of Luxembourgish national existence (*Existenzberechtigung*) (Chilla, 2009, p. 14). In this respect, the variety of international and European forums (such as Benelux, Schengen, United Nations, OECD, and NATO) functioned as venues for the small state of Luxembourg to assert its position geopolitically. International forums on sustainable development can be counted among these venues. The second function is one that is characteristic of small states: Small states have difficulty providing the human resources to cover and maintain all spheres and jurisdictions of nationhood. This is already seen in the steadily increasing

numbers of landed immigrants, whose numbers are approaching 50% of the population, and by the 70% of resident private sector enterprises, which were founded by individuals who do not hold Luxembourgish citizenship (Chambre de Commerce, 2012). In the same sense, there is a lack of human capacity available for policy-making: Tackling problems of urban transformation is immediately a problem of finding out where the information will come from, investigating the ways in which new ideas can achieve domestic understanding and acceptance, and finding someone equipped to do the work. This peculiar characteristic of Luxembourg was noted on by several of our interviewees (R1, R2, GO1, GO4). In this way, international forums are logical venues where Luxembourgish politicians can learn about, exchange, as well as generate internationally legitimized policy mechanisms that can be brought back to domestic spheres (GO3). International venues are a place to learn new ideas, but also a place to legitimize one's own ideas. Through this seemingly circular policy-making process, activists and politicians genuinely concerned for the human and non-human living environment can bring concerns to the European negotiating table, and bring them back certified by the international community.

3.2 The Domestic Circuit

With regards to sustainable development policies, in particular, interviewees commented that participation in international sustainable development policy initiatives had unfolded under specific domestic political economic conditions characteristic of that time period (GO5, GO4, GO6). It was said, that during the 1980s and 1990s, Luxembourg went through a dual process of, first, reindustrialization – that is, the restructuring of the steel industry within Luxembourg and thereby retaining its position as a magnet for international labour – and second, economic tertiarization as the financial sector began to boom and thus engaged still newer patterns of economic cross-border in and out migration. During these years, it was becoming apparent to some that the existing planning instruments were not capable of addressing the changing infrastructural needs of the country (GO6). A new planning approach was necessary to manage the emerging problems.

Contradictory processes remain easily observable, including: the rapid growth of outlying municipalities inside and outside of its national borders (Leick, 2009, p. 53); the tight private property market and low rental vacancy rates (Beyer, 2009, p. 182); social and environmental pressures resulting from commuter flows (Becker & Hesse, 2010, p. 2); and, cheap gasoline prices (Beyer, 2009, p.38) and the related national footprint (Conseil Supérieur pour un Développement Durable & Global Footprint Network, 2010). These processes are evident across all discursive spheres, and are assessed and addressed by a wide spectrum of governmental, non-governmental, private, and semi-private actors. These include the Global Footprint Network of Luxembourg and PEC. Other non-governmental milieus include, but are not limited to, Friends of the Earth Luxembourg (MECO), Greenpeace, Caritas, Climate Alliance Luxembourg, Action in Solidarity with the Third World (ASTM), and the Global Development Rights Framework Luxembourg. Finally, there are the various governmental ministries and/or departments of ministries. While this broad array of discursive spheres can be interpreted as a wider governance steering process, this paper will focus on the policy documents generated and circulated by government officials.

The Department of Spatial Planning (DATer) and the Department of the Environment are the two national bodies that generate integrative and sustainable development strategies, and as both sit on the pivotal axis bridging international policy flows and domestic politics they form the primary conduits of policy importation. Both are housed in the Ministry of Sustainable Development and Infrastructure (MDDI) and are less than 15 years old. They have produced a series of publications addressing trends of fragmentation in Luxembourg. Respectively, they produced the “National Plan for Sustainable Development, PNDD” (Ministerium für Nachhaltige Entwicklung und Infrastrukturen & Spangenberg, 2011) and the “Directive Program for Urban and Regional Planning, PDAT” (Ministère de l’Intérieur, 2003). They both targeted polarization trends in Luxembourg with regards to the scarcity of housing, automobile dependence, and social fragmentation, and stress their amelioration with integrative approaches.

With the production of the PNDD, the Ministry of Environment (Ministère de L’Environnement, 2000) maintained that the pillars of sustainability, as outlined in the Brundtland Report (United Nations, 1987), could provide the framework for development in Luxembourg. In its production, a variety of discourse trajectories were sparked. Studies were commissioned (Ministère de l’Environnement, 2006b), task forces were set up – such as the Superior Council for Sustainable Development (CSDD) and the Interdepartmental Commission of Sustainable Development (CIDD) -- indicators of sustainability were developed, and periodic strategic environmental assessments completed (Ministère de l’Environnement, 2006a, p.82–93). The final product, launched years later in May, 2011, was accompanied by a media campaign to alert the public to, and raise awareness of, fourteen identified unsustainable trends (Ministerium für Nachhaltige Entwicklung und Infrastrukturen & Spangenberg, 2011, p. 7). While the document provides extensive guidelines, no concrete plans or actions are named. The role that these ideas will play in further Luxembourgish development remains to be seen.

DATer is the primary administrative body of the national government that orchestrates integrative spatial plans for all of Luxembourg. Its primary product, the PDAT (2003), was concerned specifically with spatial planning objectives of the Grand Duchy. It was born out of the Planning Law of 1999 (Aménagement du Territoire, 1999), which remains the primary backbone of all planning directives in Luxembourg and the legal framework introducing, “sustainable development of its regions” (Aménagement du Territoire, 1999, p. 1402). Interviews with governmental officials (GO1, GO2, GO4) and researchers (R1, R3), remarked that the Planning Law of 1999: 1) had its epistemological roots in Rio; 2) was different because it usurped the top-down strategies that existed prior; and 3) introduced integrated, cross-sector planning to Luxembourg. This is further revealed in the following quotes:

“The Law of 1999 really come out of Rio because Luxembourg went to the Rio conferences [... It was developed] mainly, by the Ministry of Environment. [...] Another conclusion was the need of the participation of society: So, to create something where civil society was represented and where they could debate and think about sustainable development,” (GO1).

“The Law of ‘99 was a totally different conception. It was based in spatial development, but also based on a combination of top-down and bottom-up. So, the phi-

osophy was to have [...] top-down plans (Sector Plans) and the bottom-up plans (the *plans régionaux*). The *plans régionaux* was the idea of municipalities working together to define their vision of regional level on spatial development,” (GO4).

“First of all it was the whole sustainable debate [...] that really gave a new push to spatial planning, and I think when you read *Programme Directeur* [PDAT], I think you can feel [...] the spirit of real debate,” (GO2).

Sustainable development was a central fundament of the PDAT (Ministère de l’Intérieur, 2003, p.15–16). Generally, the PDAT redesigned the national territory of Luxembourg following a polycentric and decentralized political and nodal structure, protecting green spaces, promoting particular population growth patterns, and co-ordinating transport infrastructures.

The PDAT was also founded in part on the “Integrated transport and spatial development concept for Luxembourg, IVL” (Innenministerium *et al.*, 2004). While published after the PDAT, one interviewee (GO2) made clear that the study was developed beforehand, in 1996, but at a time when integrated spatial planning was did not exist and it was difficult to convince politicians and the public that the IVL was something useful to Luxembourg. As the PDAT emerged, as a means towards sustainable development, the time was ripe to revive the concepts of the IVL. The goal of the IVL was to determine how transport could be managed under conditions economic growth (Innenministerium *et al.*, 2004, p. 3). Like the PDAT, the IVL built upon the decentralized concentration development model of Luxembourg – identifying the three urban agglomerations of Luxembourg (Innenministerium *et al.*, 2004, p. 9) as well as 12 other mid-sized cities distributed across the nation. The concluding recommendations, echoed again in the PDAT, supported reduced reliance on private automobiles by increasing the use of public transit and controlling uneven population growth through densification.

To execute the directives of the PDAT more specific Sector Plans were defined to target the specific arenas of housing, transport, economic activity, and landscape protection. These were created by representatives from a cross-section of national ministries. The PDAT Sector Plan for Transport (*Plan Directeur Sectoriel “Transports”, PST*) (Ministère des Transports *et al.*, 2008) was designed to address the specific medium and long term transport related problems identified in the PDAT. Similarly, housing shortage problems were to be tackled by steering the production of housing spatially and regionally, activating building lands and ensuring their efficient usage. The Sector Plan for Housing (*Plan Directeur Sectoriel “Logement”, PSL*) (Ministère des Classes Moyennes, du Tourisme et du Logement & Ministère de l’Intérieur et de l’Aménagement du Territoire, 2009) addressed issues of ecological building standards and urban densification, and promoted the position that the public hand should intervene in real estate market processes. The Sector Plans on Zones for Economic Activity (*Plan Directeur Sectoriel “Zones D’Activités Économiques”, PSZAE*) (Ministère de l’Economie et du Commerce Extérieur & Ministère de l’Intérieur et l’Aménagement du Territoire, 2009) and Landscape (*Plan Sectoriel Paysage, PSP*) (Ministère de l’Intérieur et de l’Aménagement du Territoire & Ministère de l’Environnement, 2008) also set guidelines on how to best to co-ordinate economic activity while preserving forests, agriculture and biodiversity. Over the years, drafts of the Sector Plans were presented for public consul-

tation. After their final ratification, it is said that the directives will operative by national regulation (GO2, GO4, GO5, GO6, R3, R4).

All of the above named documents, produced at the national level and informed by international circuits, were explicitly integrative, cross-sector, cross-regional and multi-level in character. Most striking, however, is that after over 10 years in the making, they still have not received legal backing or implementation (GO1, GO2, GO3, GO6, R1, R3, R4). The PNDD and PDAT remain guiding documents. The Sector Plans that were ordained in the PDAT remain in their so called draft stages, although they have received several rounds of consultation and were widely publicized in the media. The policies remain discourse.

4. Observations of the Dramaturgy of Structural Encumbrances

While spatial planning took on a whole new character in 1999, it cannot be said that spatial development unfolded as a sort of haphazard accident until then, and much has been written on 19th and early 20th century Luxembourg (see Calmes, 1919; Gengler *et al.*, 2002; Margue *et al.*, 2000; Thewes, 2003; Trausch, 1981). Rather, governing systems have been in place for over a century and a half, which regulated space and land-use in a manner that seems incompatible with the recent set of integrated sustainable development plans. There is thus a certain incompatibility of systems where new strategies of coordinated development clash with older systems of regulation.

4.1 Municipal Autonomy, Politics and Land-Use in Small and 'Flat' State

The political structure that characterizes Luxembourg land-use planning today is one that was founded on notions of municipal autonomy, relatively horizontal modes of negotiation, and individual private property rights where land-owners and local politicians are the gatekeepers to land-use.

As an older nation having operated as an independent Grand Duchy since the close of the Belgian war in the late 1830s, Luxembourg's history of land-use management is entrenched in and characterized by a tradition of municipal autonomy, as well as an atomized conceptualization of territory and a territorially based polity. The nation is divided into 106 municipalities and Article 107 of the Constitution guarantees the municipalities the right to create its own Official City Plan (*Plan D'Aménagement Général, PAG*) (van Rijswijck and Wagner, 2011, p. 161). There is no regional level of government. The earliest record of a state instituted official plan is the legislation that was passed in 1937. This remained unabridged until 1974, when a need arose to find new land for industry at a moment when Luxembourg was close to bankruptcy (GO4, GO6). Until 1999, therefore, land-use planning was concerned with very specific questions such as where schools shall be located or where a waste treatment plant could be built (GO1). These were negotiations over specific plots of land for specific and local use.

This hyper-fragmented policy field is complimented by an apparently circular decision-making structure of government, where two thirds of the Chamber of Deputies are also members of Executive Municipal Councils (*Schöffengeräte*). This renders a situation, whereby those making decisions at the national level can only do so while simultaneously protecting their interests at the municipal level. One interviewee (GO2) highlighted

this as a fundamental problem. Several other respondents also noted that the smallness of Luxembourg's political community (of roughly 200,000 voting citizens) also renders a situation in which many residents know their Mayor or Chamber Representative personally (R1, R2, R3; GO7, GO8). As one interviewee explained:

"...the politicians have to look to their public environment. So, this is what you call the 'horizontal level'. Yes, you can influence them easily on that level. [via relations of] parents, family etc. [...] And these circles are really absolutely flat because someone from 'here' [gesturing to someone outside the administration yet on the same level] can talk to him. It is completely flat," (MA1).

It is thus not uncommon in Luxembourg that citizens sit across the table from government officials and either informally or formally influence national policy. Another interviewee encapsulated this phenomenon in a Luxembourgish saying:

"When a Mayor wants something, he calls the Minister in the morning, and sits with him on the sofa in the afternoon," (GO7).

This political closeness is, on one hand, open – as the Media Analyst described – as power distances between affecting and affected are short. On the other hand, it is closed because it leaves one wondering how many decisions are made through informal and interpersonal ties rather than formal and democratic political forums (GO7). This is particularly sensitive where land speculation, zoning, and building codes are concerned (MA1).

The real estate market – characterized as under high demand and in limited supply (GO6, GO9, L1) – is almost entirely private property driven, and access to land is a delicate dance between landowners, developers and local Mayors. Navigating these relations is helpful in acquiring land. One interviewee indicated that he sent 50 letters to Mayors across the country inquiring about land for sale. He received only one offer (HB1). It was more than he could afford, so he gave up. A second interviewee said her strategy was repeated requests with one Mayor. After a year of requests, the Mayor finally announced that land would be available (HB2). Her success was a result of a series of negotiations with people in opportune positions.

The Ministries that approve building plans also play an important role in land-use development. Several interviewees complained that this was a significant problem because approvals for one process often conflicted with approvals for another process (AT1, AT2; L1). It is a process that drags out the building process (AT3), and not only drives prices higher, but also scares investors away because the process is not transparent (AT1). In this system, many wonder why some projects get approved and others not, and if circuits of capital are the unknown mitigating factor (GO7, GO8).

4.2 An Older System of Carrot and Stick Policies

National policies that work in this dramaturgy are those that speak to the older and more micro-local structures. For their individual spatial development, municipalities rely primarily on an existing set of legal instruments that designate land-use and adjust tax redistribution. One standard form is the Convention Agreements (*Convention État-*

Communes). These instruments provide structures through which the government can provide subsidies to municipalities to finance municipal projects. With this carrot and stick approach, the national government can regulate change. Recently, there has also been the development of 'Convention Areas' (*Konventionsgebiete*) (Bentz, 2011, p. 191). These are a variation on the Convention Agreement model, drawn up to foster not only vertical (national-municipal), but also horizontal (municipal-municipal) collaborations. While conventions have shown some success in encouraging municipalities to work with one another (Bentz, 2011, p. 191), many have been frustrated by other attempts. What is notable for policy mobility, however, is that while integrative sustainable development plans stay in their draft stages for years, strategies that map old governing structures move forward easily.

One policy instrument that caused controversy was, for example, the Ministry of Housing's (*Ministère du Logement*) (2008) "Housing Pact" (*Pacte Logement*, PL). Designed to encourage growth along the 15 central development areas outlined in the PDAT (GO9, GO10), several interviewees complained that the policy was pushed through too fast, was counter-productive in terms of steering growth or ameliorating conditions of housing affordability, and/or contained laws that were not usable to politicians given the close power relationships (GO1, GO2, GO7, GO10, GO11, R1, A1, A2, AT4). Indeed, the PL, according to one activist (A2), was developed simply as a means to redistribute federal funds. In this respect, the PL mirrors the old system of national carrot and stick developmental steering. At the time of the development of the PL, there was even a discussion of whether it wouldn't be more effective to discuss the reform of federal funds distribution practices:

"[The PL] was a result of the banal problem that we have a very poor system of financial redistribution across the municipalities in Luxembourg. [...] Everyone knows that the distribution is poor in every aspect: It is not fair; it is not modern, and so forth. But no one has the confidence to address reform. And there was the *Pacte Logement* as an easy finance instrument. There was also a Round Table, where [the question] was asked whether it wouldn't make more sense to discuss reform financial redistribution than the *Pacte Logement*, and the Minister replied: Yes, you are right, but I have been Minister for 30 years and I don't believe anymore that finance reform will come," (A2).

4.3 Encumbering Changes in Framework Conditions

These orbits of policy operate across a system, which is unique to Luxembourg. Policy-makers had introduced new sustainable development planning strategies into a governing system that can be characterized as follows. First, there was no history of cross-sector, cross-disciplinary planning (GO5, GO3, GO6, GO9, AT3, AT4). Second, there were only mechanisms in place that supported only very localized and compartmentalized development strategies, grounded in a high degree of municipal autonomy and individual private property rights. Third, many politicians wear two hats and represent both national interests as well as particulate interests of individual municipalities. While this is, in part, a result of the gap in human resources, they remain incapable of ratifying policies that do not speak to both circuits at the same time (GO2, R1). Fourth, land-owners, politicians and the real estate market were enveloped by a system of short power dis-

tances, where private property rights and capital gain may pose more attractive land-use development options than formal government intervention.

Meanwhile, rapidly changing framework conditions were adding pressure to decision-makers. Economic production, in terms of per capita GDP, was the highest in the world (OECD, 2007). Increasing numbers of cross-border commuters and high levels of immigration were putting pressure on to provide infrastructure, while increasing land values were discouraging land owners to open up space (HB2,GO8). High levels of immigration was straining democratic participation as the number of immigrants approaches 50% of the population, and the GDP is generated by those without citizenship rights (GO8). Finally, transformation was occurring at a rate that was increasingly difficult to reign in and control, and the necessity to find solutions was more urgent than ever (GO6, GO7).

It can be said that the set of integrative sustainable development policies that were observed in this research were mobile at a poignant moment in Luxembourg's history, and while pressure was mounting, the Luxembourg dramaturgy retained structural encumbrances that prohibited implementation of the new integrated spatial development plans and guidelines. The older systems of land-use governance were ill-equipped to address horizontal, cross-sector approaches to sustainable development determined by the national government. The imported policies demanded cross-municipal co-operation and inclusion that may or may not be desired. They were also imported at a time when framework conditions were changing at a pace too rapid to make steadfast predictions about the course of development.

5. Conclusions and implications of policy paralysis

Tracing the trajectories of sustainable development policies showed how they were generated, how they flowed through various orbits of governance, and how they were influenced and shaped by various epistemological directions. A great divide was seen among policy models, whereby those that were largely inspired and informed by international forums on sustainable development were integrative policies (e.g. PNDD, PDAT, and IVL) and they suffered a lethargic implementation. Once imported into the domestic field, they were immobilized. Meanwhile, laws addressing particulate problems or concerns of financial redistribution received quick legitimacy and legal ratification. These policy models were workable across the pre-existing governing structure. There are thus structural mismatches that stop circulation of integrative sustainable development policies.

It is difficult to determine who shall break the decision-making impasse in Luxembourg to enable change: the national government that regulates and administers tax revenues from the tertiary economy; the municipalities who define land-use (Hesse, 2013, 20) and whose citizenry who have reaped immense individual and collective profits from the political economic system regardless of whether or not they have ideologically supported it; or the other one half of the population, the majority of whom have immigrated within the last five years, and do not participate at all. It is difficult to determine who will demand new structures that can deal with integrated sustainable spatial development. These are some of the uneasy questions that residents of Luxembourg

are addressing today, which have a profound impact on the ability of the nation as a collective unit to co-ordinate and steer an inclusively defined sustainable urban and regional planning at the various necessary scales.

Perhaps more open forums are needed where participants can agree on the priorities of development, and perhaps more horizontal and vertical dialogue is needed to facilitate the exchange and flow of ideas and solutions. Perhaps structural adjustments in the governing structure are needed in order that integrated co-operative planning is possible, given recent changes in framework conditions. At the moment, however, because integrative planning measures are so difficult to pass, national policy makers are left with one of three options. The first option is to maintain the flow of ambiguous discussion, and forgo conclusive action. This can be interpreted in two ways. On one hand, it can be interpreted as the persistence of a perpetual stasis of post-political consensual and immaterial discussion. On the other hand, it might be conceived as idea formation. Evans and Jones (2008, p. 1417) argued that the ambiguity of “sustainable development” can strengthen the planning normative, as ambiguity leaves space for deliberation as a shared territory. Similar observations were made by Holden, who proposed that sustainability can be seen as a, “...struggle to learn more, to learn better, and to learn in a more contextualized fashion within the communities of our lived experience” (Holden, 2006 p. 172). Integrated approaches in Luxembourg would certainly demand sharing territory in a literal and material sense. The discursive sphere of participation and discussion, which is so valued by the municipalities (R1), might further be conceived as a shared logico-epistemological territory. A second option is to clamp down and force sustainability. Yet, while it is perhaps easy to criticize that integrative sustainable development policies are not receiving legal backing, it must also be noted that legal enforcement would likely spark outrage across Luxembourg land-use management circles who claim municipal jurisdictional autonomy, and proclaim the lack of credibility of national initiatives. A third option is to water down the law either in such a way as to dilute it of all meaning, or in such a way as to leave a back door open such that anyone can refuse the goal in the end. As plans remain in their draft stages, it would appear that the first option was chosen. Either way, however, sustainable development as a policy in circulation carrying with it a normative point of departure loses all impact and consequence. Luxembourg can thus be inventoried among those failed attempts of bringing sustainability initiatives closer to reality.

Policy circuits in Luxembourg thus implicate some interesting lessons on policy mobility as is discussed in urban studies in recent years. Until now, many authors have criticized the mobility of policy on the grounds that neoliberal strategies are being imprinted around the globe. The case of Luxembourg, however, represents some dilemmas to this position. First, clearly not all policies are mobile in Luxembourg. Policies generated at the European or wider international levels are imported to Luxembourg, but are then circulated through the particular political dramaturgy that is characterized, at first glance by a well-to-do two-level Westphalian state. A closer look, however, reveals a system wrought with conflicts of interest on horizontal, cross-border playing fields. The end result is that, without action, it is difficult to bring imported policies beyond the discussion stage – immaterial discourse, post-political as it were. The incompatibility of integrated planning approaches with pre-existing structures and their associated internal systemic logics has already been noted elsewhere (Stead & Meijers,

2009; Allmendinger & Haughton, 2009). It is this same interface of mismatches that is a lesson for policy mobility: Luxembourg is namely a case where the mismatch of systems immobilizes the policy.

Second, the mobility of policy might be desirable. The travelling of business improvement district policies or models of new urbanism may come along with a long series of negative implications and consequences as authors (McCann & Ward 2010) have appropriately implicated. Maybe some urban regions may well, indeed, have been better off resisting and immobilizing such policies. Still, it is less clear what should be said about the mobility of policies that might bring positive and inclusive transformation, that at the same time demand new strategies and constellations of governance. Luxembourg finds itself at a certain crossroads in this respect. The speed of change, its associated pressures, and related emerging polarizations in Luxembourg have brought many to reconsider means of co-ordinated and even change. Not few, too, are questioning whether or not the current systems of governing are adequate. There is an old Luxembourg motto, "We want to stay what we are" (*Mir wëlle bleiwen wat mir sinn*), and one interviewee encapsulated the current dilemma with a spin on it, "If we want to stay what we are, we have to change what we are" (GO1). A mobile policy might be just that fix.

Finally, this research can also add to the geography of global webs and flows or embodied and logico-epistemological knowledge as Luxembourg, too, can be found on the web of discursive and material relations that interflow across this urbanized planet. First, Luxembourg can be surely be located in the broad web of flows that connect the spaces listed by Ward (2006), McCann (McCann & Ward, 2010), and González (2011) – namely the multi-scalar spaces of global capitalist policy transfer. Specially, relations can be drawn to other similar places such as financial centres with strong governmental apparatuses also propagating sustainable development. Second, it is also now possible to connect Luxembourg to more distant places like Whistler, whose socio-political economic formation may greatly differ, but who remains bound on the same circuit of sustainability policy. On this map of flows, for better or for worse, Luxembourg appears as a discursive blockage.

Acknowledgements

The author wishes to extend deep gratitude to the reviewers who provided very helpful and constructive comments on earlier drafts of this paper. The author is also grateful for the support of the *Fond National de la Recherche*, Luxembourg. Earlier versions of this paper were presented at the 2012 Annual Meeting of the American Association of Geographers, in a session entitled "Situating Urban Sustainability," as well as at the Third Workshop the Regional Studies Association's Network of Ecological Regional Development.

References

Allmendinger, P. & Haughton, G. (2009) Critical reflections on spatial planning, *Environment and Planning A*, 41, pp. 2544-2549.

- Aménagement du Territoire (1999) *Mémorial A-No 61 - Journal Officiel du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg, Service Central de Législation* (Luxembourg: Grand-Duché Luxembourg).
- Baker, S. (2005) *Sustainable Development* (London: Routledge).
- Becker, T., & Hesse, M. (2010) Internationalisierung und Steuerung metropolitaner Wohnungsmärkte: Das Beispiel Luxemburg, *Informationen zur Raumentwicklung*, 5(6), pp. 1–13.
- Bentz, M. (2011) Staatlich-interkommunale Kooperationsprozesse im Bereich der Stadt- und Regionalentwicklung, in: T. Chilla, & C. Schulz (Eds) *Raumordnung in Luxemburg, Aménagement du Territoire au Luxembourg*, (Luxembourg: Éditions Guy Binsfeld).
- Berke, P. R. (2008) The Evolution of Green Community Planning, Scholarship and Practice, *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 74(4), pp. 393–407.
- Beyer, A. (2009) Tanktourismus - Ein einträglicher Unterschied, in: P. Bousch, P. Gerber, O. Klein, C. Schulz, D. Wiktorin, & C. Sohn (Eds) *Der Luxemburg Atlas du Luxembourg*, (Cologne: Hermann-Josef Emons Verlag).
- Butler, J. (2006) *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (London: Routledge).
- Calmes, A. (1919) *Der Zollanschluss des Großherzogtums Luxemburg an Deutschland (1842-1918): Bd. Der Eintritt Luxemburgs in den Deutschen Zollverein (1839-1842)* (Frankfurt a.M.: Universität Frankfurt a.M.).
- Chambre de Commerce (2012) Le rayonnement transfrontalier de l'économie luxembourgeoise: la diversité règne, l'intégration piétine, *Bulletin économique de la Chambre de Commerce*, (12).
- Chilla, T. (2009) Luxemburg in Europa: Prominente Position eines kleinen Staates, in: P. Bousch, P. Gerber, O. Klein, C. Schulz, D. Wiktorin, & C. Sohn (Eds) *Der Luxemburg Atlas du Luxembourg*, (Cologne: Hermann-Josef Emons Verlag).
- City of London & Z/Yen Group Limited (2010) *Global Financial Centres 7*. (London: City of London).
- Conseil Supérieur pour un Développement Durable & Global Footprint Network (2010) *L'Empreinte écologique du Luxembourg* (Luxembourg: Conseil Supérieur pour un Développement Durable & Global Footprint Network).
- Evans, J. & Jones, P. (2008) Rethinking sustainable urban regeneration: Ambiguity, creativity, and the shared territory, *Environment and Planning A*, 40, pp.1416–1434.
- Gengler, C., Michel M., Metzler, J. & Trausch, G. (2002) *Histoire du Luxembourg: Le destin européen d'un 'petit pays'* (Toulouse: Éditions Privat).

- González, S. (2011) Bilbao and Barcelona “in motion”: How urban regeneration “models” travel and mutate in the global flows of policy tourism, *Urban Studies*, 48(7), 1397–1418.
- Grydehøj, A. (2011) Making the most of smallness: Economic policy in microstates and sub-national island jurisdictions, *Space and Polity*, 15(3), pp. 183-196.
- Hesse, M. (2013) Das "Kirchberg-Syndrom": grosse Projekte im kleinen Land, *disP - The Planning Review*, 192, 1/2013, pp. 14-28.
- Holden, M. (2006) Urban indicators and the integrative ideals of cities, *Cities*, 23(3), pp. 170–183.
- ICLEI -Local Governments for Sustainability & City of Aalborg. (2004) Aalborg+10 - Inspiring Futures. Retrieved September 30, 2010 (<http://www.aalborgplus10.dk/media/pdf2004/finaldraftaalborgcommitments.pdf>).
- Innenministerium, Transportministerium, Ministerium für Öffentliche Bauten & Umweltministerium (2004) *An Integrated Transport and Spatial Development Concept for Luxembourg (IVL)* (Luxembourg: Innenministerium, Transportministerium, Ministerium für Öffentliche Bauten, & Umweltministerium).
- Jordan, A. (2008) The governance of sustainable development: Taking stock and looking forward *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy*, 26(1), pp.17–33.
- Lefebvre, H. (1991) *The Production of Space* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers).
- Leick, A. (2009). Suburbanisierung: Wenn die Stadt ins Umland wächst, in: P. Bousch, P. Gerber, O. Klein, C. Schulz, D. Wiktorin, & C. Sohn (Eds) *Der Luxemburg Atlas du Luxembourg*, (Cologne: Hermann-Josef Emons Verlag).
- Margue, M, Polfer, M. & Scuto, D. (2000) *Entdecken und Verstehen - Geschichtsbuch für den Technischen Sekundarunterricht Luxemburg* (Berlin: Cornelsen Verlag).
- Massey, D. (2005) *For Space* (London: Sage).
- McCann, E. & Ward, K. (2010) Relationality/territoriality: Toward a conception of cities in the world, *Geoforum*, 41, pp. 175–184.
- Meadowcroft, J. (2007) National sustainable development strategies: Features, challenges and reflexivity, *European Environment*, 17. pp. 152–163.
- Ministère de l'Economie et du Commerce Extérieur & Ministère de l'Intérieur et l'Aménagement du Territoire (2009). *Plan Directeur Sectoriel Zones d'activités économiques / Avant-projet de plan* (Luxembourg: Le Gouvernement du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg).
- Ministère de l'Environnement (2006a) *Luxembourg's Initial Report under the Kyoto Protocol* (Luxembourg: Ministère de l'Environnement).

- Ministère de l'Environnement (2006b) *Rapport national sur la mise en œuvre de la politique de développement durable* (Luxembourg: Ministère de l'Environnement).
- Ministère de L'Environnement (2000) *Plan National Pour Un Développement Durable* (Luxembourg: Ministère de L'Environnement).
- Ministère de l'Intérieur (2003) *Programme Directeur D'Aménagement du Territoire* (Luxembourg: Ministère de l'Intérieur).
- Ministère de l'Intérieur et de l'Aménagement du Territoire & Ministère de l'Environnement, (2008) *Plan Sectoriel Paysage, Avant projet de plan* (Luxembourg: Ministère de l'Intérieur et de l'Aménagement du Territoire & Ministère de l'Environnement).
- Ministère des Classes Moyennes, du Tourisme et du Logement & Ministère de l'Intérieur et de l'Aménagement du Territoire (2009) *Plan Directeur Sectoriel "Logement" - Vorentwurf* (Luxembourg: Ministère des Classes Moyennes, du Tourisme et du Logement & Ministère de l'Intérieur et de l'Aménagement du Territoire).
- Ministère des Transports, Ministère de l'Environnement, Ministère de l'Intérieur et de l'Aménagement du Territoire & Ministère des Travaux Publics (2008) *Plan Directeur Sectoriel Transports / Projet de Rapport Technique - Résumé* (Luxembourg: Ministère des Transports, Ministère de l'Environnement, Ministère de l'Intérieur et de l'Aménagement du Territoire & Ministère des Travaux Publics).
- Ministère du Logement (2008) *Le Pacte Logement* (Luxembourg: Ministère du Logement).
- Ministerium für Nachhaltige Entwicklung und Infrastrukturen, & Spangenberg, J.H. (2011) *PNDD Luxembourg: Ein Nachhaltiges Luxembourg für Mehr Lebensqualität* (Luxembourg: Ministerium für Nachhaltige Entwicklung und Infrastrukturen).
- OECD (2001) *Sustainable Development* (Paris: OECD).
- OECD (2002) *Improving Policy Coherence and Integration for Sustainable Development* (Paris: OECD).
- OECD (2007) *OECD Territorial Reviews: Luxembourg* (Paris: OECD).
- Parra, C. & Moulaert, F. (2011) Why sustainability is so fragilely "social", in: S. Oosterlynck, J. Van den Broeck, L. Albrechts, F. Moulaert, & A. Verhetsel (Eds) *Strategic Spatial Projects: Catalysts for Change* (New York: Routledge).
- Peck, J., & Theodore, N. (2001) Exporting workfare/importing welfare-to-work: Exploring the politics of Third Way policy transfer, *Political Geography*, 20, pp. 427-460.
- Pratt, G. (2004) *Working Feminism* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press).
- Redclift, M. (2005) *Sustainability: Critical Concepts in the Social Sciences* (London: Routledge).

- van Rijswijck, A. & Wagner, C. (2011) Der Kommunale Flächennutzungsplan (Plan D'Aménagement Général), in: T. Chilla, & C. Schulz (Eds) *Raumordnung in Luxemburg, Aménagement du Territoire au Luxembourg*, (Luxembourg: Éditions Guy Binsfeld).
- Robinson, J. (2011) Cities in a world of cities: The comparative gesture, *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 35(1), pp. 1–23.
- Roy, A. (2009) The 21st-century metropolis: New geographies of theory, *Regional Studies*, 43(6), pp. 819–830.
- Schulz, C., & Walther, O. (2009) Finanzplatz Luxemburg, in: P. Bousch, P. Gerber, O. Klein, C. Schulz, D. Wiktorin, & C. Sohn (Eds) *Der Luxemburg Atlas du Luxembourg*, (Cologne: Hermann-Josef Emons Verlag).
- Smith, M.P. (2000) *Transnational Urbanism: Locating Globalization*, 1st ed. (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell).
- Statec Luxembourg (2010) *Le Luxembourg en chiffres* (Luxembourg: INTERPUB).
- Stead, D. & Meijers, E. (2009) Spatial planning and policy integration: Concepts, Facilitators and Inhibitors, *Planning Theory & Practice*, 10(3), pp. 317–332.
- Temenos, C. & McCann, E., (2012) The local politics of policy mobility: Learning, persuasion, and the production of a municipal sustainability fix, *Environment and Planning A*, 44(6), 1389–1406.
- Thewes, G. (2003) *Les gouvernements du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg depuis 1848* (Luxembourg: Service Information et Presse).
- Trausch, G. (1981) *Le Luxembourg à l'époque contemporaine* (Luxembourg: Editions Bourg-Bourger).
- United Nations (1987) Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future. Available at http://www.un.org/esa/dsd/resources/res_publcorepubli.shtml?utm_source=OldRedirect&utm_medium=redirect&utm_content=dsd&utm_campaign=OldRedirect (accessed 23 August, 2010).
- Ward, K. (2006) "Policies in motion", urban management and state restructuring: The trans-local expansion of business improvement districts, *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 30(1), pp. 54–75.
- Ward, K. (2010) Towards a relational comparative approach to the study of cities, *Progress in Human Geography*, 34(4), pp. 471–487.