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NEW ZEALAND'S CAPACITY FOR GREEN PLANNING: A POLICTICAL-INSTITUTIONAL ASSESSMENT AND ANALYSIS[1]

TON BÜHRS

Abstract

In the 1990s, New Zealand, as many other countries, took initiatives towards the development of more comprehensive, integrated and long-term environmental policy, often referred to as 'green planning'. Although green planning is generally seen as a promising new stage in environmental policy development, it often falls far short of the promise. In this article, the notion of 'capacity' is used to analyse some of the difficulties with green planning in New Zealand. Ways by which New Zealand's capacity for green planning can be strengthened are discussed, but it is argued also that capacity-building has been constrained by broader political-institutional factors and developments.

Keywords: *Capacity-building; (strategic) environmental policy; green planning; New Zealand; policy integration.*

Since the 1980s, the need for comprehensive, integrated and long-term environment policy has been increasingly recognised, internationally as well as by national governments. By now, most governments in the world have taken steps in this direction and introduced policies or strategies that come under a variety of labels, such as sustainable development or

TON BÜHRS is a Senior Lecturer at Lincoln University, where he teaches environmental policy. His research interests lie in New Zealand, comparative and international environmental policy (email address: buhrst@lincoln.ac.nz).

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environmental strategies, environmental policy plans, or green plans.[2] The spread of green planning, used here as the generic term for these efforts, can be seen as marking a new stage in environmental policy development. Green planning, at least in theory, implies moving away from *ad hoc*, reactive and fragmented policy making towards a more anticipatory approach based on a recognition of the linkages between, and directed at the sources of problems.

However, the practice of green planning falls short of its theoretical promise. In most countries, environmental policy integration remains highly problematic, particularly with regard to the development of economic, energy, transport and agricultural policies. In many cases, the effectiveness of green plans is unknown or uncertain, as systematic monitoring and evaluation of their implementation is lacking. The apparent weakness of some efforts is such that they provide reason for arguing that they amount to symbolic policy.[3] In several countries, including New Zealand, green plans came to grief, and were formally or *de facto* abandoned after a change of government, effectively demonstrating their failure as long-term policy.[4] As yet, there are few success stories and the promise of green planning remains largely unfulfilled.

Dismissing green planning as meaningless or impossible is no option, however, for those who believe in the need for environmental policy integration. Rather than giving up on green planning, it is more fruitful to explore ways of strengthening it. More specifically, there is a need for assessing how the support basis for green planning can be built or reinforced, and how its vulnerability to the vagaries of politics can be reduced. In that context, the notion of capacity building for green planning is useful. Capacity analysis involves looking at political-institutional conditions and factors that shape or influence policies and the policy process, and provides a basis for identifying ways by which the chances of survival, and the effectiveness of green planning could be enhanced. Building or strengthening the political-institutional capacity for green planning makes it less vulnerable to the whimsical nature of politics, even if politics will continue to have the final say.

This article, first, explains the meaning and significance of green planning. Second, the concept of capacity is clarified, and its main constituent elements identified. Third, New Zealand's capacity for green planning is assessed. Fourth, some of the broader political-institutional constraints on New Zealand's green planning capacity are discussed. Finally, prospects and ideas for strengthening New Zealand's capacity for green planning are presented, and conclusions drawn.

GREEN PLANNING: EMERGENCE AND MEANING

The concept of green planning is used to refer to the introduction, in a growing number of countries, of comprehensive, integrated and long-term environmental policy, laid down in policy documents under a variety of labels, such as national environmental policy plan, national environmental action plan, sustainable development strategy, or green plan. By 1994, it was estimated that around one hundred countries had introduced some

2 Martin Jänicke and Helge Jörgens, 'National Environmental Policy Planning: Preliminary Lessons from Cross-National Comparisons', *Environmental Politics*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (1998), pp.27-54; Huey D. Johnson, *Green Plans. Greenprints for Sustainability* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1995).

3 Ton Bührs, 'Green Plans: A New Generation of Symbolic Environmental Policies?', Paper presented at the ECOPOLITICS X Conference, The Australian National University, Canberra, 26-29 September, 1996.

4 Ton Bührs, 'Green Planning in Australia and Canada: Dead or Alive?' *Environmental Politics*, Vol. 9, No. 2 (2000), pp.102-125. In New Zealand, the Labour-Alliance Government that came to power in 1999, abandoned the *Environment 2010 Strategy* that was adopted by the preceding government. More than halfway through its term, in August 2001, the new government announced its intention to develop a formal sustainable development strategy.

form of green plan.[5]

The rationale for green planning may include environmental (ecological), economic, and political benefits or imperatives. It can be seen as a response to the ineffectiveness of previous *ad hoc* and fragmented environmental policy efforts, as a means for accommodating conflicting development (economic) and environmental interests, as a way to reduce uncertainty about future environmental demands upon business, thereby enhancing the climate for economic investments, and to boost perceptions of a government's environmental commitment. Notwithstanding these (potential) advantages for many parties, however, the most important driving force behind the introduction of green planning in many countries has been international pressure. The integration of environmental, economic and social policies has been advocated by international environmental organisations since the early 1980s,[6] by the World Bank (that made the adoption of National Environmental Action Plans a prerequisite for loans from the Bank),[7] the Brundtland report,[8] and the UNCED conference ('world summit') in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. The latter two both called upon governments to produce sustainable development strategies, and acted as significant catalysts for the adoption of such policies throughout the world. To a large extent, the move towards green planning by many governments concurs with the rise of the 'sustainability discourse' as a prominent if not hegemonic discourse at the global level.[9]

Although green planning comes in a variety of forms, it can be described in general terms as environmental policy that (to varying degrees):

(1) Is comprehensive and integrative. It involves the integration or co-ordination of policies and the integration of environmental values and considerations across areas and sectors. Sometimes, the term 'internal integration' is used to refer to the integration of policies usually characterised as 'environmental', and 'external integration' to describe the integration of environmental considerations and policy objectives into non-environmental policy areas, such as agriculture and transport.

(2) Is set within a long-term timeframe. As it may take many years to resolve environmental problems or realise ambitions, the formulation of long-term goals and objectives provides direction for medium and short-term policy.[10]

(3) Involves strategic analysis. Strategic analysis involves the analysis of the connections between problems, causes or factors, and policies, with the aim to address the causes of problems rather than their symptoms and to identify pressure or leverage points that offer scope for the most (cost-)effective action.

(4) Contains specific objectives and targets. Green planning is about making environmental policy more transparent and accountable by formulating clear

5 Jeremy Carew-Reid, Robert Prescott Allen, Stephen Bass, Barry Dalal Clayton, *Strategies for Sustainable Development. A Handbook for their Planning and Implementation* (London: Earthscan Publications Ltd. In association with IUCN and IIED, 1994), p.40.

6 IUCN/WWF/UNEP, *World Conservation Strategy* (Gland, Switzerland: IUCN, 1980); World Conservation Union, *Caring for the Earth: A Strategy for Sustainable Living*, (London: Earthscan, 1991).

7 Julian A. Lampietti and Uma Subramanian, *Taking Stock of National Environmental Strategies* (Washington D.C.: The World Bank, 1995); Sergio Margulis and Janis Bernstein, *National Environmental Strategies: Learning From Experience* (Washington, D.C.: The World Bank, 1995).

8 World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED), *Our Common Future* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987).

9 John S. Dryzek, *The Politics of the Earth. Environmental Discourses* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

10 Long-term is a rather relative concept, but in this context one should think of 10-20 years or more. Such a timeframe has been specified, for instance, in the Dutch, British, and New Zealand plans. However, many plans have an open timeframe, and/or operate on a shorter term (3-5 year), but ongoing ('rolling') basis. Barry Dalal-Clayton, *Getting to Grips with Green Plans. National-Level Experience in Industrial Countries* (London: Earthscan, 1996), p.26.

objectives against which performance can be assessed. This is particularly important given the stretchable nature of the notions of sustainability and 'sustainable development' that increasingly are used as the overarching aim of green plans.[11]

(5) Involves public participation and stakeholders. These are often seen as an important condition for effective green planning, although few green planning efforts 'have involved any serious attempts to involve stakeholders in a genuinely participatory way'.[12]

(6) Is laid down in a formal, written policy statement(s). The policy document constitutes a formal commitment on the part of the government, and enhances transparency and accountability in environmental policy. This may involve producing revised or new statements on a regular basis.

Given its comprehensive and integrative ambitions, and the longer timeframe for which aspirations are formulated, it needs to be emphasised that green planning is not about resurrecting the ideal of 'rational-comprehensive' decision-making. The debate about the limitations and shortcomings of that model of decision-making and, for that matter, of incrementalism, has not been very fruitful, and will not be revived here. Most policy theorists now acknowledge that rational analysis (improving knowledge and understanding) and politics (power, values and interests) both play a role in policy development, and that the search for improved policy performance requires both taking into account, and moving beyond the 'rational-comprehensive' *versus* incrementalism debate. The spread of green planning itself indicates that governments recognise the need for policy development that is less disjointed than is commonly the case, that is sustained by trans-disciplinary analysis and by support from across policy areas and sectors, that addresses the sources of problems rather than their symptoms, and that involves translating the principle or goal of sustainable development into specific objectives and actions.

That is not to say that all governments are equally committed to, and successful in, green planning. It should be emphasised that the characteristics of green planning identified above are variables rather than constants, and that green planning efforts vary largely in comprehensiveness, the degree of policy integration, the length of timeframes, the specificity of objectives, the extent of participation from the public and stakeholders, and the nature and quality of strategic analysis.[13] These variations reflect differences in political-economic, socio-cultural and environmental contexts and conditions, institutions, demands, priorities, and aspirations. In other words, the characteristics of green planning listed above are mediated through the political institutions and processes of a particular country.

This does not mean, however, that all green plans and planning efforts are fine as they are, and that they cannot be evaluated against common criteria. Their effectiveness and meaningfulness are likely to vary from country to country, and even over time within a country. However, little is known about the environmental outcomes or effectiveness of green

11 It is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss the theoretical and political intricacies associated with defining or translating these terms. I only want to note that the processes of defining and translating these concepts into action constitute a 'politics of sustainability' in which science and rationality as well as interests play a role, and in which environmental concerns can become subsidiary to other interests, such as economic growth, the standard of living, and social and political aspirations. For clarity's sake, I use the term 'environmental policy' to refer to policies directed at protecting or enhancing ecosystems, the quality and long-term availability of resources, and the bio-physical conditions affect the quality of life of humans. When I use the term 'environmental outcomes', this refers to changes in either or all of three, inter-related, dimensions of the environment.

12 Barry Dalal-Clayton,. *Getting to Grips with Green Plans*, p.30.

13 Martin Jänicke and Helge Jörgens, 'National Environmental Policy Planning: Preliminary Lessons from Cross-National Comparisons'; Barry Dalal-Clayton, *Getting to Grips with Green Plans*.

planning efforts in most countries. In the literature on green planning, one can find a range of criteria for 'good' planning, based foremost on the characteristics listed above (such as whether clear targets are formulated, the extent of public participation, and the degree of comprehensiveness or integration), but very little on the actual environmental outcomes.[14] Among the reasons for this are that many green planning efforts are not accompanied by provisions for their evaluation, that they are inadequately monitored, and that plans have been abandoned or poorly implemented.[15] The Netherlands is a favourable exception in these respects, and arguably is leading the field in green planning.[16]

The fact that is very hard if not impossible to determine the environmental (quality) outcomes of green planning efforts in many countries is itself a reflection of its relatively young and vulnerable status and undeveloped potential. To be able to deliver and demonstrate desirable outcomes, green planning requires a stable and strong basis, within the political-institutional framework and in terms of the capacity for its development, implementation, and monitoring. To be effective, green planning has institutional and policy process requirements that, in many countries, have yet to be met. This brings us to the notion of the capacity for green planning.

CAPACITY FOR GREEN PLANNING

The aim of this section is to clarify the concept of capacity in connection with green planning. First, an argument is put forward for a more circumscribed definition of the concept than is common in much of the literature. Second, I will elaborate on what I see as the main elements of the capacity for green planning, to clarify their importance.

Defining capacity

The terms capacity, capacity building and capacity development, came in vogue since the mid-1980s, and can be seen as marking a new stage in the development discourse, following on from discussions about institution building, institutional strengthening, development management, and institutional development. In the 1990s, the concept of capacity was extended to incorporate environmental concerns.[17]

14 Detlef Jahn provides an assessment of environmental performance, in terms of environmental outcomes, of 18 OECD countries, and finds better environmental performance correlated with a range of factors (such as neo-corporatism, the existence of Strong Social Democratic parties, and GNP), but does not discuss and include the role of green planning in the analysis. Jahn's analysis demonstrates, however, that the effectiveness and limitations of green planning need to be assessed and considered in a broader context. I will return to this point later in the article. Jahn, Detlef (1998), "Environmental Performance and Policy Regimes: Explaining Variations in 18 OECD Countries". *Policy Sciences*, Vol. 31, pp.107-131. For 'lessons' or criteria for 'good' green planning, see Martin Jänicke and Helge Jörgens, 'National Environmental Policy Planning", pp.48-50.

15 Green Plans adopted by Governments in Canada, Australia and New Zealand have been formally or *de facto* abandoned by successive governments. Carew-Reid notes that about 70 per cent of all sectoral and thematic strategies in Africa formulated up to 1994 have not been implemented. Carew-Reid *et al*, *Strategies for Sustainable Development*, p.127)

16 The extent of progress towards specific environmental targets and outcomes is reported on annually by an independent agency, based on a comprehensive and systematic system of monitoring. These reports indicate that in most environmental problem areas interim objectives (mostly emissions reductions) have been achieved, but that in other areas environmental pressures continue to build up (such as with regard to greenhouse gas emissions, emissions from transport) and exert a negative effect on environmental conditions. For information in English, see: *Dutch Environmental Data Compendium 2001*. http://www.rivm.nl/environmentaldata/index.html. For an account and discussion of the Dutch experience and approach see: Paul De Jongh and Sean Captain (1999), *Our Common Journey: A Pioneering Approach to Cooperative Environmental Management* (Zed Books).

17 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), *Developing Environmental Capacity. A Framework for Donor Involvement* (Paris: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 1995); Martin Jänicke and Helmut Weidner (eds.), *National Environmental Policies. A Comparative Study of Capacity-Building* (Berlin: Springer, 1997); Lennart J. Lundqvist, 'Environmental Politics in the Nordic Countries: Policy, Organisation, and Capacity', in Peter Munk Christiansen (ed.), *Governing the Environment: Politics, Policy, and Organization in the Nordic Countries* (Copenhagen: Nordic Council, 1996), pp.13-25.

The concept of 'environmental capacity' is often interpreted very broadly.[18] Although this tendency is understandable, as numerous factors influence or affect environmental policy, it is problematic for two interrelated reasons. First, the more broadly the concept is defined, the less useful it is analytically. If the notion of capacity is defined in such a way that it virtually encompasses almost everything that affects environmental policy development, everything becomes 'capacity'. Second, such broad interpretations fail to distinguish between general and distant factors that *affect* capacity, and the more specific and immediate *capacity of agents* of green planning.[19] Although the *conditions* for green planning may improve or decline with changes in numerous (economic, social, political) variables, this does not necessarily amount to a similar or proportionate variation in the *capacity of the agents* of green planning. For instance, an organisation responsible for green planning may continue to have the same level of power and even resources despite declining economic conditions – much depends on the extent to which green planning has been institutionalised, and on the level of capacity that has already been built.

Martin Jänicke distinguishes two main categories of the 'capacity for the environment': (1) the strength, competence and configuration of organised governmental and non-government proponents of environmental protection and (2) 'structural framework conditions', comprised of (a) cognitive-informational, (b) political-institutional, and (c) economic-technological conditions. The political-institutional framework conditions include 'participative capacity', 'integrative capacity', and 'capacity for strategic action'. In this scheme of things, capacity relates to the political system as a whole as well as to the capacity of actors. The scale and nature of environmental problems facing a country, cultural values and environmental awareness, economic conditions and performance, and political-institutional factors are referred to as some of the most important factors that appear to affect environmental performance.[20]

Building on Jänicke's interpretation of environmental capacity, but keeping in mind the argument in favour of a more circumscribed definition of environmental capacity, my analysis of New Zealand's capacity for green planning will be based on two elements: (1) the formal political-institutional basis and arrangements for green planning, and (2) the policy development capacity of green planning agents (or advocates). The first element relates to the formal/legal status of green planning (whether or not it has been institutionalised), and to the formal role, status, and power assigned to the organisation(s) that has/have been given responsibility for green planning. The policy development capacity of green planning agents refers to the ability of those who have responsibility for, and/or advocate green planning, to enhance the effectiveness of green planning, and includes their cognitive capacity, support building or integrative capacity, and implementation or resource capacity. This interpretation thus focuses on the capacity of agents and advocates of green planning, and on those 'framework conditions' that affect these actors more directly. Such a focus offers a more realistic and useful basis for a discussion about how the capacity for green planning can be strengthened compared to broader analyses based on virtually all-encompassing

18 For instance, the Working Party on Development Assistance and Environment of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) defined 'capacity in environment' as 'a society's ability to identify and solve its environmental problems'. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), *Capacity Development in Environment*, p.13.

19 Here, agents of green planning are defined as those (individuals and organisations) who *actively* advocate and promote green planning as described above. This may include a government agency that has been given 'lead' responsibility for (the development of) a green plan, but agents can exist within other government organisations (at all levels) and outside of government.

20 Martin Jänicke, 'The Political System's Capacity for Environmental Policy'.

interpretations (in terms of actors and factors) of 'environmental capacity'.

Elements of green planning capacity

As noted above, in this article, capacity for green planning is assessed against two dimensions: (1) its formal political-institutional basis, and (2) the policy development capacity of green planning agents (or advocates). This section elaborates on both to highlight their importance.

Given the long-term nature of green planning, and its demonstrated vulnerability to the vagaries of politics, it requires a legal basis to enhance its durability. A legal basis for green planning does not necessarily imply the elevation of a green plan to law, but can involve a requirement that a new or revised plan is produced on a regular basis. Although this is, of course, no guarantee that a government will continue on a line of green planning adopted by its predecessor, institutionalisation does enhance the survival chances of green planning as a process. Countries where green planning has been given a legal basis, such as the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and South Korea, are more likely to (have) produce(d) more than one plan over time than countries where green planning has not been legally entrenched.

Providing a legal basis for green planning also enhances the legitimacy and status of the agency or agencies that have been assigned responsibility for it, and helps clarify the roles, rights, and responsibilities of those who are expected to take part in the green planning process. As policy integration is a core element of green planning that commonly meets considerable obstacles and resistance, often from powerful government departments and other vested interests, the effectiveness of green planning depends in large part on the existence of a lead agency that has been assigned formal responsibility for guiding the process. This is particularly important *vis à vis* departments and actors that demonstrate little or no environmental concern or enthusiasm for green planning. Even in the Netherlands, where the 'ownership' of green plans is formally shared between a range of government departments, the Directorate for Strategic Planning within the Environment Ministry has been formally assigned a lead role in the process, which has proved to be essential with regard to overcoming what can be called euphemistically a lack of enthusiasm on the part of some other departments. Although allegedly the status and effectiveness of the Ministry has fluctuated with changes of Ministers and governments,[21] this has not prevented the Ministry from continuing to carry out its responsibilities as a lead agency for green planning. By contrast, in Canada, where the responsibility for green planning has not been legally defined, the agency that *de facto* led the process towards the adoption of the Green Plan, Environment Canada, suffered badly in status and capacity with the demise of the Plan under a following government.[22]

Taking an agent-oriented perspective to the analysis of the capacity for green planning does not imply focusing exclusively on (enhancing) the power and role of a single organisation with responsibility for green planning, such as a Ministry for/of the Environment, or a Sustainable Development Council/Commission. Arguably, one of the most important reasons for the vulnerability and limited effectiveness of green planning in most countries is that the responsibility for, and involvement of, other agencies and actors with regard to green

21 Lucas Reijnders (1993), *Het Milieu, de Politiek, en de Drie Verkiezingen*. (Amsterdam: Van Gennep), pp.100-104.

22 Toner, Glen (1996) "Environment Canada's Continuing Roller Coaster Ride", in: Gene Swimmer, ed., *How Ottawa Spends 1996-97. Life Under the Knife*. (Ottawa: Carleton University Press), pp.99-132.

planning has been inadequately institutionalised and co-ordinated. For green planning to survive and succeed, advocacy will have to be institutionalised across government (at all levels), and in the private sector. To be effective, it requires a network of formally designated advocates or champions throughout society.

Important, in this context, is the institutionalisation of green planning at lower levels of government, such as states or provinces, regions and municipal councils. The adoption of a long-term environmental plan or sustainable development strategy ('Agenda 21') has been made a legal requirement for provinces in the Netherlands, and local councils in Sweden and in New South Wales in Australia, and has been strongly promoted by the British government.[23] Institutionalisation at the regional and local level of government not only facilitates the implementation of a national green plan, but is also important in its own right, with regard to the integration of local/regional environmental values into decisions and actions at the sub-national level. However, strategies and plans developed at lower levels of government need the guidance of an overarching (national) plan to ensure or promote consistency, complementarity and synergy. Where green planning at the national level is weak or waning, as has been the case New Zealand, it also has difficulty getting off the ground at lower levels of government.

Policy development capacity can be defined as 'the ability to develop and design policies in a way that enhances their (likely) effectiveness'.[24] Important elements of that capacity are knowledge and understanding ('cognitive capacity'), support ('support building or integrative capacity'), and means for implementation ('resource capacity'). Policies require a sound knowledge basis and understanding of problems, and of 'how the world works', sufficient support from target groups and others who are affected by, or involved in, the implementation of policies, and appropriate tools and resources (including skills, funding, communicative means, and physical resources) to be effective. Effectiveness refers to the extent to which desired outcomes are achieved (the ultimate test), but it should be kept in mind that the value of policies may lie also or foremost in other things, such as in their expressive value (the confirmation of collective values or beliefs), a strengthening of social cohesion (building agreement; reducing sharp conflict), spreading and enhancing knowledge and public awareness, and in enhancing citizenship and democracy (for instance, by encouraging public involvement). Notwithstanding these other values, however, the extent to which a policy's goals and objectives are achieved is usually seen as a crucial measure of effectiveness.

As many of the causes of environmental problems lie in the policies and practices in what are usually considered 'non-environmental' areas, such as energy use, transport, agriculture, and science and technology, the integration of environmental concerns into these areas is of foremost importance, arguably even more so than the integration of policies and practices that are commonly labelled 'environmental', especially if these are directed mainly at the management of the *effects* of the former. Which issues or policy areas are most important strategically depends on the relative contribution of industries and sectors to the environmental pressures of a region or country. An analysis of these contributions can form the basis for the formulation of a 'target group' policy as an important element of the integrative capacity for green planning, as has been developed in the Netherlands.

23 Phil Hughes, Local Agenda 21 in the United Kingdom: A Review of Progress and Issues for New Zealand. (Wellington: Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment, 2000).

24 Ton Bührs, 'The OECD's Assessment of New Zealand: The Politics of International Environmental Performance Reviews', *Ecopolitics Thought and Action*, Vol.1, No.1 (2001), p.75

As mentioned before, focusing on the political-institutional basis for green planning and the development capacity of green planning agents does not imply that other (contextual) factors do not affect the level of capacity for green planning. Rather, the two elements identified are seen as the constitutive elements of capacity, comprising factors that are likely to circumscribe more directly what green planning agents can do in a given context. Many other factors and developments impinge on the capacity as defined by these two elements. Some of these factors will be discussed later.

NEW ZEALAND'S CAPACITY FOR GREEN PLANNING

As noted above, a political-institutional analysis of the capacity for green planning involves looking at the formal arrangements for green planning, including the formal status and power of green planning agencies, and at their policy development capacity.

Formal arrangements

In New Zealand, the main agencies with broad responsibility for environmental matters, at the national level, are the Ministry for the Environment, the Department of Conservation, and the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment. The Ministry for the Environment is the principal environmental policy agency, having a broad mandate to advise the government on all environmental matters. The Department of Conservation's main role is to manage the country's conservation estate (National Parks and reserves), and to provide policy advice on nature conservation and protection issues. The Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment (PCE) is an independent 'watchdog', accountable to Parliament. The Commissioner keeps under review the environmental system as a whole, and investigates and reports on issues at Parliament's request or the PCE's own initiative. Apart from these, there are several more specialist agencies, such as the Environmental Risk Management Authority (ERMA), which has a regulatory role regarding hazardous substances and new organisms, and the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Agency (EECA), which has responsibility for promoting what its name suggests. Notwithstanding the importance of these environmental agencies, other government departments also play a crucial role in shaping or influencing environmental policies and practices, such as the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, the Ministry of Transport, and the Ministry of Fisheries, and the Ministry of Economic Development, and the Ministry of Health.

With the introduction of the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA), Regional, District and City Councils have been allocated the main responsibility for watching over the quality of the local environment and for keeping under control the environmental effects of development. Regional Councils, established in many cases along natural boundaries, have lead responsibility for, among other, the management of water, air and transport, including pollution control. District and City Councils (referred to as 'Territorial Authorities' in the RMA), carry the main responsibility for the management of the environmental effects of land use. All Councils must develop and regularly update plans (Regional Policy Statements, District and City Plans) in which they lay out their objectives and rules, and are required to do so within the overarching purpose of the RMA, which is the sustainable management of natural and physical resources.

In New Zealand, at the level of central government, green planning has not been institutionalised. Although the *Environment 2010 Strategy* was meant to be updated every four years, this was a political intention, not a statutory rule. The intention appeared to be rather flexible as, more than five years later, a new or revised strategy still had to be

completed. The new Labour-Alliance government that came to power in December 1999 was in no way bound by the intentions of its predecessor, and effectively abandoned the *Environment 2010 Strategy* without giving any indication as to its own intentions on this matter. In July 2001, the government took a decision to develop a Sustainable Development Strategy, following a meeting of the OECD Ministerial Council meeting where it was agreed that OECD member states 'will ensure that Sustainable Development Strategies are put in place in all our countries by the time of the World Summit' in Johannesburg in September 2002.[25] However, the decision does not make any reference to establishing a statutory basis for strategic environmental policy development, or to a need for the institutionalisation of green planning at the national level. The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet was given the lead role in the development of a draft government statement of goals and principles for sustainable development.

In this context, it should be emphasised that the references to the Resource Management Act 1991 as New Zealand's green plan[26] are based on a misunderstanding, or different interpretation, of green planning. The Resource Management Act provides an institutional framework for decision making about environmental issues, particularly at the local and regional level, but is not a *government policy* document. It is enabling, offering the central government the possibility of producing *national policy statements* on environmental issues. The *Act* itself does not contain specific goals, objectives or targets, does not stipulate a timeframe for achieving objectives, and does not contain strategic analysis. Much of the decision making that takes place under the act focuses deliberately on (avoiding, mitigating or remedying) the *biophysical effects* of proposed activities, not on achieving specified (economic, social and/or environmental) objectives. Despite the fact that its expressed goal is to promote the sustainable management of natural and physical resources, it has been argued that 'it is not and was not intended to be an Act to deliver sustainable development'.[27] And it does not provide a framework for green planning at the national level.

Since the mid-1990s, strategic policy development has become an important plank in government activity, in part because of a perceived need to improve policy transparency, accountability and co-ordination. However, these developments have had little effect on, or relevance for, the institutionalisation of green planning. Probably of greatest importance in this respect has been the introduction of the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Act in 2000. The Act, the outcome of a Private Members' Bill initiated by a Green Party MP, Jeanette Fitzsimons, requires the development of a National Energy Efficiency and Conservation Strategy (NEECS), and strengthens the advocacy role of the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Authority (EECA), which, from 1 July 2000, became a stand-alone Crown Entity (no longer operating within the Ministry of Economic Development), monitored by the Ministry for the Environment.

As noted above, in several countries, governments have introduced a formal requirement for local government to adopt sustainable development strategies. In New Zealand, no such requirement has been introduced, and only seven district and city councils have formally adopted a sustainable development strategy under an 'Agenda 21' label, although around thirty percent of all councils refer to their strategic plans as Agenda 21 documents or claim to have adopted Agenda 21 principles.[28] However, newly elected councils are not bound by the

25 Helen Clark Speeches and releases, *Proposal – New Zealand Sustainable Development Strategy*. http://www.liveupdater.com/labour/liveartieleplm.asp?ArtID=93106551.

26 Huey D. Johnson, *Green Plans*., 68-87; Martin Jänicke and Helge Jörgens, 'National Environmental Policy Planning:', p.36.

27 Stephen Knight, 'Agenda 21 in New Zealand: Not Dead, Just Resting', *Australian Journal of Environmental Management*, Vol.4, No.2 (2000), p.214.

28 Dorothy Wilson, Catherine Syme and Stephen Knight, *Sustainable Development in New Zealand: Here Today, Where Tomorrow?* Pacific Rim Institute of Sustainable Management, 2001, pp.64-72.

commitments contained in these documents, and may choose to abandon them altogether, as has been the case in some instances.[29] District and city plans, by contrast, are legally required under the Resource Management Act, but are at most starting points for green planning. Many councils appear to lack the political will to adopt sustainable development principles, and see green planning as going beyond their mandates.[30] Although most local authorities have strategic plans, few of these are about sustainable development.[31]

Regional Policy Statements (RPSs) that Regional Councils are required to produce under the Resource Management Act, arguably qualify better as green plans. These have a longer-term (ten-year) timeframe, and are required to provide a comprehensive picture of the environmental issues facing a region. Moreover, the Act stipulates that Regional Policy Statements should be specific with regard to the objectives that Councils want to achieve, and provide a justification for the proposed actions directed at achieving these objectives. This could be interpreted to imply a requirement for strategic analysis, analysis aimed at identifying the most effective ways and means for addressing the causes of environmental problems. Also, as Regional Councils operate on a geographical ('catchment') basis that can be seen as conducive to taking an integrated or 'ecosystemic' approach to environmental management, they are arguably an important lynchpin in green planning.

In practice, however, Regional Policy Statements appear to fall short of their potential as regional green plans. Most Regional Councils take a narrow view of their responsibilities, and focus primarily on their regulatory tasks and on specific biophysical environmental issues. Few councils have ventured into 'non-environmental' policy areas, with the exception of transport, which is a core responsibility of Regional Councils. In general, they are perceived to have no mandate or role in economic and social development, or in the development of an overarching policy framework for sustainable development.[32] In their present position, Regional Councils lack the power to expand their role in green planning. In fact, their very existence and role in environmental planning still seems insecure. Many district and city councils have never accepted the rationale for the establishment of Regional Councils, and continue to challenge their legitimacy. In some areas, they have been disestablished and their functions have been transferred to 'unitary' councils (*de facto* district councils with extended powers). Although this option has been closed off, the political support basis of Regional Councils is still shaky. Perhaps surprisingly, even the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment has not acknowledged that they are a vital component in New Zealand's institutional framework, thus keeping the door open for future challenges to their existence.[33]

At the time of writing, the Local Government Bill is still before Parliament. One of the aims of the proposed legislation is to "enable local authorities to play a broad role in promoting the sustainable social, economic, environmental, and cultural well-being of their communities"[34] The Bill departs from the prescriptive approach towards local government that prevailed in the past, and moves towards a more 'empowering' regime. Local government will have more freedom to do what it wants to do, within the context of the aim referred to

29 Dorothy Wilson, Catherine Syme and Stephen Knight, *Sustainable Development in New Zealand*, p.64.

30 Dorothy Wilson, Catherine Syme and Stephen Knight, *Sustainable Development in New Zealand*, p.64.

31 Dorothy Wilson, Catherine Syme and Stephen Knight, *Sustainable Development in New Zealand*, p.75.

32 Dorothy Wilson, Catherine Syme and Stephen Knight, *Sustainable Development in New Zealand*, p.71-72.

32 Dorothy Wilson, Catherine Syme and Stephen Knight, *Sustainable Development in New Zealand*, p.71-72.

33 Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment, *Local Government Environmental Management – A Study of Models and Outcomes*. (Wellington: Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment, 1999). The National Party, in its 'Fixing the RMA Campaign' expresses explicitly a commitment towards an expansion of the 'Unitary Council model'. The National Party, 'Fixing the RMA Campaign', 2001.

34 New Zealand Government, *Local Government Bill*. http://www.dia.govt.nz/diawebsite.nsf/Files/Localgovtbill/$file/191burl.pdf, p.35.

above ('quadruple bottom line'). The Bill also aims to provide an "enhanced framework for consultation, planning, decision-making (including financial management), and reporting by local authorities". Councils will be required to produce a comprehensive long-term council community plan (LTCCP) in which "community outcomes" are specified for a 10-year period.[35]

At face value, the proposed regime holds promise for the promotion of a more integrated approach to decision making and policy development, and for a strengthening of the formal green planning capacity of local government. However, how things will work out, and what weight will be given to the environmental concerns and objectives in the context of the specification and selection of "community outcomes" will depend in large part on the play of political forces. In this context, it is important to note that the Bill does not refer to the LTCCPs as (local) sustainable development strategies, does not provide for the establishment of local or regional sustainable development councils, and does not talk about any linkages between community plans and the NZ Sustainable Development Strategy that is being developed at the national level.

Altogether, the formal institutional framework for green planning in New Zealand suffers from gaps and a lack of coherence. There is no central government agency with a formal mandate for green planning, let alone with green planning as its main responsibility. There is no legal requirement for green planning to be undertaken at the national level, and it is debateable whether Regional Policy Statements and District and City Plans, the production of which is mandatory under the Resource Management Act, and even Community Plans, are forms of green planning. Although some councils have taken steps towards green planning, they have done so without the support of an overarching national framework for green planning, and often alongside the plans or policy statements that are mandatory under the Resource Management Act. On several issues, environmentalists and local government agencies have long pleaded with the government to formulate National Policy Statements under the Act, but until recently such demands have been ignored.[36] However, the production of National Policy Statements should not be confused with green planning, as they are likely to focus on particular issues and may actually promote a fragmented ('issue-by-issue') rather than an integrated approach to environmental policy development.

Policy Development Capacity

In this section, New Zealand's capacity for the development of green plans will be assessed, in particular at the national level. It leaves a lot to be desired. There are major gaps in cognitive capacity, resource capacity is pitiful, and support-building capacity is virtually non-existent. It will be argued that these shortcomings reflect weaknesses in environmental policy development capacity in general.

In a review of New Zealand's environmental performance by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD),[37] is was commented that, to a large extent, it was not possible to assess the state of the New Zealand environment, and the effectiveness of environmental policies, because of insufficient information. This was seen by the OECD as '[...] a significant barrier to effective implementation of all New Zealand's environmental policies'.[38] These gaps in cognitive capacity were confirmed in New Zealand's

35 New Zealand Government, *Local Government Bill*, http://www.dia.govt.nz/diawebsite.nsf/Files/Localgovtbill/$file/191barl.pdf, pp.4, 64.

36 In the year 2000, the government initiated a process towards the development of a National Policy Statement on Biodiversity.

37 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), *Environmental Policy Reviews. New Zealand.* (Paris, OECD, 1996).

38 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), *Environmental Policy Reviews. New Zealand*, pp.106-107; 112.

first *State of the Environment* report, published in 1997, in which Simon Upton, the Minister for the Environment at the time, stated that '[...] the picture that emerges is far from comprehensive', and that New Zealand's system for collecting environmental information needed to be improved.[39]

Following the OECD's review, the Ministry for the Environment's programme of developing a 'core set' of environmental performance indicators was boosted by additional funding. By 2001, the Ministry had developed indicators for most of the categories contained in the programme, and the programme is expected to be complete by 2002. The Ministry also initiated a consultation process about proposals for a national state of the environment reporting system, involving local government. Altogether, a team of more than ten staff is working on the Environmental Performance Indicators programme, and it seems fair to conclude that capacity in this area has been strengthened.

However, to what extent these improvements enable the Ministry for the Environment, or any other agency, to undertake fuller and regular environmental reporting remains unclear. The Ministry for the Environment is not legally required to produce a *State of the Environment* report, let alone annually. Its role in this area is politically vulnerable, depending on the Minister's and the Government's priorities and allocation of funding. No indication has been given yet as to whether or when a second *State of the Environment* report will be published, and if and how the reporting system will fit into the policy and budget cycle. Also, it is doubtful that the system of indicators that is being developed will provide sufficient information for an analysis of (trends in) the causes of environmental problems. Most of the indicators developed generate information about developments in environmental conditions, and very few are directed at measuring changes in activities or processes that contribute to environmental problems ('pressure indicators'), and especially from those (sectors, industries) who contribute most.[40]

Support building or integrative capacity for green planning assumes the existence of a support basis for a start. As noted above, much of the move towards green planning stems from international organisations and agreements, whereas environmental ministries or departments usually form the main, perhaps even only, driving force at the national level. Political support at the highest level is a necessary condition for its adoption, but has proven to be vulnerable. Bureaucratic obstacles and opposition to green planning (and the agency carrying responsibility for it) is often strong. As green planning does not serve the specific interests of any particular group in society, there is little if any demand for it, and little political capital to be gained from it. For all these reasons, green planning is only likely to endure if it is institutionalised, including its advocates and the task for extending the support basis. The catch is, of course, that such institutionalisation itself requires ongoing political support at the highest level.

Arguably, New Zealand's principal institutional advocate for green planning is the Strategic Policy Group within the Ministry for the Environment. The Group produced the *Environment 2010 Strategy*, New Zealand's first step towards green planning, and is the only agency in government (since the abolition of the Environmental Council in the late 1980s) whose main responsibility lies in long-term and strategic environmental policy development, in a broad sense.[41] For a variety of reasons, however, the Group has not been a strong and

39 Ministry for the Environment, *The State of New Zealand's Environment 1997.* (Wellington: Ministry for the Environment, 1997), p.1.

40 K.F.D. Hughey, S.S. Rixecker, R. Montgomery and T. Bührs, eds., *New Zealand's State of the Environment Report: A Critical Response.* (Canterbury: Lincoln University, 1998).

41 Although the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet has been given a lead role in the development of the Government's Sustainable Development Strategy (SDS), this is not its only or main role, and it is unlikely that it will be given on-going responsibility for green planning, or for the implementation of the SDS.

effective advocate for green planning. Its capacity has been limited by its very small size (only four staff/policy analysts), and very modest resource base. Moreover, the group's (strategic) work extends to a broad range of other areas, to a large extent dictated by political priorities. As it is not insulated from the Ministry's day-to-day requirements, the group has very little time left for actual long-term environmental policy development, or for building and cultivating a network of green planning advocates across government agencies. Although a follow-up to the *Environment 2010 Strategy* was due in 1999, work on it was far from being completed by December 1999, when a change of government took place.

Potentially significant to New Zealand's integrative (or support building) capacity for green planning across policy sectors is the National Energy Efficiency and Conservation Strategy, mentioned above. The purpose of the NEECS is to promote energy efficiency, energy conservation and renewable energy within the context of a sustainable energy future. The first Strategy, developed by the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Authority (EECA), was adopted in September 2001. As required by the Act, the Strategy is organised around objectives, policies and targets formulated within a long-term timeframe, and supported by a set of short-term measures. However, how effective the Strategy will be depends largely on the integration of its objectives and policies into other policy areas, and on adequate resources. As stated in the Strategy: 'It should be noted that a number of measures in the Strategy cannot be considered a commitment at this stage, either because they depend on other Government policy development, or because they require additional funding that will need confirmation through normal Government budget-setting processes.' The targets are not mandatory, but in the nature of benchmarks ('something to aim for').[42]

In this context, developments in the agriculture and transport sectors, in particular, are important as these are major contributors to many of New Zealand's environmental problems. However, the sustainable agriculture 'position paper' that was developed by the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (MAF) in 1992, and consequently adopted by Government, is a non-committal document in which the role of the Government is depicted as '[...] primarily that of encouraging market-led adjustment to sustainable practices'.[43] To implement this approach, 'MAF will facilitate discussions at the national, regional and local level, involving land users, local government and other community interests. The focus will be on working with farmers, and other parties, to identify specific issues for the dairy sector, for horticulture, for sheep and beef farmers and other sectors, and to identify what needs to be done to help them address those issues.'[44] So far, the outcomes of the approach are not apparent (or even monitored), whereas public concern about the environmental effects of the rapid expansion of the dairy farming has reached new heights. Also, there is no sign that this has led to a strengthening of advocacy, or to an increase in resources, for green planning within the agricultural sector, and it remains to be seen if this will be the case in the transport sector.

As things stand, New Zealand's capacity for green planning is far from impressive. Green planning lacks the institutional basis required to ensure continuity. Institutional advocacy for green planning is confined to a handful of people without a clear mandate, independent position, power, and significant resources. Support for green planning across government agencies is minimal, whereas indifference and opposition are far more common.

42 Energy Efficiency and Conservation Agency (EECA)/Ministry for the Environment: *National Energy Efficiency and Conservation Strategy. Towards a Sustainable Energy Future.* Wellington, 2001, Preface; p.5.
43 http://www.maf.govt.nz/mafnet/publications/sustainable-agriculture-position-paper/suspol05.htm
44 http://www.maf.govt.nz/mafnet/publications/sustainable-agriculture-position-paper/suspol06.htm

Neither does there seem to be much enthusiasm for green planning at the local government level (for instance, under the Agenda 21 umbrella), or in the business sector. Although strategic policy development appears to have become a favourite tool of government, used in a wide array of policy areas, these efforts do not occur within a broad green planning framework. From an environmental or sustainability perspective, the significance and outcomes of these efforts is uncertain at most, and possibly negative, as economic goals and theories provide the overarching framework. As the advocates for green planning in New Zealand are few and far between, and are without significant institutional backing, boosting its capacity is likely to occur only because of external pressure and demands, and/or when political support at the highest level is forthcoming.

As hinted at above, however, strengthening the capacity for green planning faces major obstacles, many of which are rooted in the broader political-economic context within which all policy development takes place. Political action and change addressing constraints inherent to New Zealand's political-economic system may be required to overcome these obstacles.

BROADER POLITICAL-INSTITUTIONAL CONSTRAINTS ON GREEN PLANNING IN NEW ZEALAND

Many of the constraints upon green planning have their roots in the broader political-economic and institutional context. As noted above, the role and significance of green planning efforts can only be understood in that broader context. Green planning, as a form of long-term and comprehensive policy development directed at the integration of environmental concerns across all policy areas, faces obstacles associated with a political system that is geared towards meeting, in the first instance, the demands of interest groups, in particular those that are well-endowed with resources, well-organised, and capable of mobilising support for their cause, within government and its agencies and/or among the public at large, using the media and the services of public relations experts. Although environmental interest groups may win some battles in this contest, these are mainly confined to specific issues, and do not alter fundamentally the political-economic institutional framework that specifies the rules by which decisions and policies are made. Notwithstanding the rationalisation and strengthening of environmental institutions in the 1980s and early 1990s, the 'playing field' is still far from level when it comes to weighing economic, social, and environmental interests in the policy and decision making process. In particular, long-term social and environmental concerns consistently lose out, or are being paid lip service at most.

In New Zealand, as in other countries where neo-liberal and 'New Right' ideology has become politically dominant, the capacity of the State to develop effective policies, including social, health, education, and environmental policies, has diminished, whereas problems have increased. Long-term planning, economic 'intervention', the social welfare state and environmental regulation, the mechanisms that take the sharp edges off raw capitalism, have come under attack because they are said to 'distort' or stifle development. Privatisation, property rights and (quasi-) market-based approaches, voluntary agreements, devolution (to local government and communities), and 'information and education' have become preferred policy instruments. Meanwhile, the number of public servants was reduced from more than 72,000 in 1987 to less than 32,000 in 1997, in the name of enhancing the efficiency,

45 State Services Commission, *Assessment of the State of the New Zealand Public Service.* Wellington: State Services Commission. Occasional Paper No.1, 1998, p.6.

transparency, and accountability of the public service.[45]

It is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss and assess the (de-)merits and outcomes of these reforms and policies. Suffice it to say that these reforms and policies have attracted much critique and raised considerable concern about their outcomes, not only from those who disagree with the ideological orientation underlying them. Within the government itself, concerns have been expressed about the quality of policy advice provided to the government, concerns which appear to be well founded at least with regard to some departments in an assessment undertaken by the State Services Commission.[46] In part, the problems relate to a shortage of skilled staff,[47] a deterioration in the working conditions for most public servants, a high level of stress, a decline in real wages, increased job uncertainty, low morale, and the apparently ongoing process of restructuring.[48] But the problems are also structural. The strong emphasis on vertical accountability (of departments to Ministers) makes policy co-ordination and integration even more problematic than before, and reinforces the short-term policy orientation.[49] Despite the introduction of a more strategic approach in the mid-1990s, policy development remains trapped in the three-year electoral cycle. But perhaps the most remarkable, and disturbing, finding from the assessments of the public service is that the system has little or no capability, or even interest, in determining its *effectiveness*. Although many government departments may perform well in achieving outputs, very little is known about, or undertaken to find out to what extent departmental efforts contribute to achieving outcomes, even those specified by ministers.[50] Ministers appear to be neither very interested nor concerned about this, for a variety of reasons.[51]

The capacity to take a more comprehensive and integrated approach to policy development assumes a willingness to look beyond departmental and sectoral interests. If green planning is about trying to achieve specific goals and targets across policy areas and sectors, the capacity of the public service to operate in a concerted manner, and to assess the outcomes of such efforts, is crucial. In this context, the erosion of the public service ethic may be as important as the practical difficulties associated with co-ordination. That this ethic has been a victim of the reforms, is acknowledged in an assessment of public management developments in New Zealand by the OECD,[52] in which it is stated that 'New Zealand's public management reforms have created a system in which employees' sense of loyalty is to their employer, department or agency, rather than to the Public Service', and that there is likely to be a 'renewed focus on ethics, and on re-establishing a Public Service ethos'.

Socio-political developments also may contribute to diminish the political system's capacity to develop integrated and long-term policy. Social theorists argue that the accommodation or integration of interests may have become more difficult in recent decades with the decline or dissolution of shared values and ideologies, trust and social capital, in societies. Societies, it is argued, have become increasingly pluralist, whereas the traditional mechanisms for integrating conflicting interests and demands have been eroded. For instance, Marsh[53] argues that the integrative capacity of governments in Australia has declined due to the pluralisation of Australian society and the collapse of the classic two-party system.

46 State Services Commission, *Assessment of the State of the New Zealand Public Service*, p.8.
47 State Services Commission, 1999, p.19.
48 State Services Commission, *Assessment of the State of the New Zealand Public Service*, p.14-15.
49 State Services Commission, 1999, pp.45-53.
50 State Services Commission, *Assessment of the State of the New Zealand Public Service*, p.21.
51 State Services Commission, *Assessment of the State of the New Zealand Public Service*, p.8.
52 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, *Public Management Developments in New Zealand: Update 2000*. http://www.oecd.org/puma/country/Surveys2000nz.htm, p.5.
53 I. Marsh, 'State Capacity for Policy Making: Has it Diminished? Can it be Renewed?', http://polsc.anu.edu.au/papers.htm (2001).

The traditional support and membership basis of the main parties has shrunk considerably, and political parties have become media-focused publicity machines, more concerned about image and style of leaders than about building membership and coalitions of interests. This erosion of integrative capacity is particularly damning for the development of long-term policies, including green planning.

These findings indicate that strengthening the capacity for green planning in New Zealand by boosting the power and resources of a dedicated agency is unlikely to be sufficient, and perhaps not even possible. More fundamental political-institutional change is required to enhance the capacity and long-term viability of green planning.

TOWARDS GREATER CAPACITY?

Whether New Zealand's capacity for green planning will increase depends largely on two interrelated questions. First, on the extent to which the perceived need and/or demand for green planning grows. Second, on whether and how the obstacles to expanding capacity can and will be reduced or overcome.

In New Zealand, as in many other countries, the demand for green planning stems largely from international organisations and developments, and from the government agency carrying the main responsibility for environmental policy. Apart from a few individuals and groups operating at the local level, there is little or no demand for green planning from other quarters. As the domestic demand for green planning can be expected to remain low, its revival and long-term viability and capacity depend foremost on growing external demand, political leadership, and on the extent to which advocacy will be institutionalised. Probably most important among these factors is that the international demand for green planning is, if anything, increasing. As noted above, in July 2001, the OECD resolved that by the next 'World Summit' ('Rio+10') meeting in September 2002, all member states are expected to have in place a sustainable development strategy. Internationally, the adoption of an environmental or sustainability strategy has come to be seen as a component of 'good governance', and has even become a formal requirement for loans provided by the World Bank. Although in 'developed' countries the introduction of such strategies has been voluntary, the existence and perceived quality of a green plan has become an internationally important factor affecting a country's environmental image.

The importance of a positive international environmental image has been recognised by recent governments. As the environmental performance of countries has become the subject of international assessment, there is a growing concern about the need to match environmental policy efforts with New Zealand's 'clean and green' image, which is vitally important to the country's international trading position. That New Zealand cannot afford to be seen to lower its environmental commitment (by dropping the *Environment 2010 Strategy*), was apparently recognised by the Prime Minister, Helen Clark who, in July 2001, announced that the Government was going to develop a formal sustainable development strategy, and that it is the aim of the government 'to see New Zealand as a world leader in sustainable development'.[54] The initiative ended the period of stagnation in strategic environmental policy development that began since the Labour-Alliance government came to power, in large part because of a Minister for the Environment who demonstrated no

54 Prime Minister Helen Clark, Address to Conference of Local Government New Zealand, http://www.executive.govt.nz/speech.cfm?speechralph=35383&SR=1 (16 July 2001).

enthusiasm for green planning.

Whether the revival of green planning in New Zealand, largely due to international pressure, means that it will be put on a more enduring and firmer basis, remains to be seen. A crucial lesson that can be drawn from green planning developments in other developed countries is that green planning needs to be given a statutory basis to survive the vagaries of politics. Such legislation can be relatively simple and short, specifying mainly the frequency and responsibilities for green planning, and does not need to encompass the details of a green plan. Moreover, as domestic demand and support for green planning is weak, the expansion of support relies foremost on institutionalised advocacy. In that context, it is important to shelter the principal agency responsible for green planning (for instance, a Sustainable Development Council), from day-to-day policy demands, to ensure that it is not subjected to short-term political pressure, that it is perceived to be non-political (in the sense of being linked to a political party), and that it can focus on longer term objectives. Its main role would be, apart from developing the draft initial plan or strategy, to advise governments on the longer-term requirements for the advancement of sustainability, on amendments to the plan, and to monitor and assess the implementation of the plan by other government agencies, local government bodies, and actors in non-government sectors. The agency should be equipped with sufficient staff and resources. Council members representative of a broad range of environmental, social, and economic interests should be appointed for their expertise as well as demonstrated commitment toward sustainability.

To enhance the effectiveness of green planning, it is also important that national, regional and local planning efforts are co-ordinated. Regional and local strategies need to be supported by objectives and actions at the national level, and *vice versa*. Advocacy and responsibility for green planning at the regional/local level also will need to be institutionalised to ensure durability and to enhance capacity. Credibility and effectiveness are likely to be enhanced if responsibility is allocated to independent bodies that 'point the way' to elected governments.

Above, cognitive capacity was identified as an area of policy development capacity that also needs further strengthening, despite recent improvements in this respect. As green planning is directed at achieving specific outcomes (rather than producing outputs), an assessment of its effectiveness depends heavily on a highly developed capacity to monitor and analyse developments. To enhance New Zealand's capacity in this area, the institutional framework for collecting economic, social, and environmental data, analysis and reporting, needs rationalisation and integration. This also is a task better undertaken by an independent body (such as a Bureau of Statistics) that functions at arm's length from government. Such an agency may also play a role in the development of alternative accounting mechanisms that provide more genuine and accurate measures of social, environmental, and economic developments and well-being in New Zealand.

The viability of these suggestions could be drawn into question, given the broader political-institutional and political-economic obstacles discussed above. Existing agencies and vested interests are likely to take the view that they stand to gain little from the institutionalisation of green planning, and even less from allocating responsibility and capacity for it to independent 'sustainability watchdogs'. The prevailing neo-liberal paradigm provides not much scope for 're-embedding' economic policy into social and environmental policies, or for any form of green planning or 'steering'. Furthermore, the potential for 'planning' at the national level arguably diminishes with the process of economic globalisation.

Yet, history is not a linear process, and contradictions remain inherent to the development of capitalism, with or without 'really existing socialism'. As Polanyii noted in *The Great Transformation*: ' [...] the idea of a self-adjusting market implied a stark utopia. Such an institution could not exist for any length of time without annihilating the human and natural substance of society; it would have physically destroyed man and transformed his surroundings into a wilderness.'[55] Capitalism and globalisation need green planning to maintain or prolong the social and ecological basis on which future development can occur. As noted, it provides a policy framework that helps to reduce uncertainty and the chance of unpleasant surprises. Although it imposes constraints on business, it is also in the collective and long-term interests of business that it is undertaken. Thus, there is a strong case for an 'enlightened' government to introduce and strengthen green planning, even in the face of opposition from business.

As noted above, green planning is foremost a management tool for government to accommodate conflicting economic, social and environmental, demands. It seeks to harmonise policies in an integrated and long-term framework. If done seriously, it will respect, to some degree, social and ecological concerns and limits. But for those who believe that more fundamental political-economic and socio-cultural changes are required to resolve the environmental problematique, green planning is limited in what it offers, at least in existing forms. Even if undertaken seriously, it is unlikely to address the structural or root causes of many social, environmental and economic problems. In the Netherlands, a country that is perceived to be a leader in green planning, the government admits that it has reached structural barriers. The fourth National Environmental Policy Plan acknowledges the systemic nature of the sources of the more intractable problems, and talks about the need for system innovation.[56] Despite this, the measures contained in the Plan are modest and incremental rather than radical, and there is a perception among environmentalists that, in recent years, environmental policy has stalled, or even weakened.[57].

Paradoxically, then, green planning, when undertaken seriously, will reach a stage where it demonstrates its own limits. Without more fundamental political-economic and socio-cultural change, green planning may assist in mitigating social and environmental decline, but is unlikely to resolve problems in the long-term. Without fundamental political-economic change, it is likely that new problems will emerge, and that social and environmental conditions will deteriorate. For fundamental change to happen, however, more than green planning is needed, and a new wave of social and political mobilisation will need to occur.

CONCLUSION

Green planning has been adopted by many governments, foremost in response to calls and demands of international groups and organisations promoting environmental protection and social and economic development. Green planning is a form of comprehensive, integrated and strategic policy development, usually under the banner of 'sustainable development', aimed at accommodating conflicting demands associated with rising environmental pressures, social needs and aspirations, and hardening 'economic imperatives', nationally and internationally.

Despite the potential political, economic and environmental advantages of green

55 Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation. The Political and Economic Origins of our Time*. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1944), pp.3-4.

56 Ministerie van Volkshuisvesting, Ruimtelijke Ordening en Milieu (VROM), *Nationaal Milieubeleids Plan 4. Een Wereld en Een Wil – Werken aan Duurzaamheid*. The Hague: Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and Environment, 2001. http://www.minvrom.nl/minvrom/docs/bestellingen/milieu14546.pdf., chapter 4.

57 Editorial, *Milieudefensie*, Vol.30, No.9, September 2001, p.4.

planning, it has had a chequered history also in New Zealand. Initiatives have been driven principally by international pressure and demands, whereas domestic advocates are few and far between. Green plans easily fall victim of political vagaries, especially if green planning as a process has not been institutionalised. In New Zealand, as in many other countries, the capacity for green planning, defined in terms of the political-institutional basis of green planning agents and/or advocates, and their ability to develop green plans that are effective, is weak.

Strengthening the capacity for green planning implies strengthening its institutional basis as well as shoring up cognitive capacity, integrative or support building capacity, and implementation or resource capacity, at the national, regional and local levels of government, across government departments and in the non-government sectors. Although, in recent years, New Zealand's cognitive capacity for green planning has improved, it is still far from adequate for effective green planning, whereas the institutional, support building, and resource capacity dimensions are even more lacking.

The level of green planning capacity is affected and constrained by wider political-institutional conditions and factors. In New Zealand, the capacity for developing integrated and long-term policy, not only with regard to environmental issues, appears to have declined rather than increased as a result of the reforms in the 1980s, especially those in the public service and public sector. Whether and to what extent the capacity of green planning agents can and will be strengthened depends foremost on the level of external demand, and on supportive political leadership at the highest level. Although recently both of these factors have led to a revival of the green planning process, it remains to be seen if this will lead to green planning receiving a more secure and powerful institutional basis and/or a significantly higher level of, in particular, integrative capacity and resource capacity.

Political-institutional change, especially in the public service, is required to further enhance New Zealand's capacity for integrated and long-term policy development, including green planning. However, as political institutions and priorities increasingly appear to be subsidiary to 'economic imperatives' in a global context, even significantly enhanced capacity for green planning will not necessarily deliver better social and environmental outcomes. Paradoxically, the more effective green planning becomes, the more its limitations as a tool for managing conflicting economic, environmental, and social demands become apparent. On its own, green planning will not resolve the structural sources of environmental problematique, but it may help to expose them. Given the present level of green planning capacity in New Zealand, however, there is still quite some way to go before that will be the case.