



Integration of the Sustainable Development Evaluation process in Regional Planning: promises and problems in the case of France

François Bertrand, Corinne Larrue

► To cite this version:

François Bertrand, Corinne Larrue. Integration of the Sustainable Development Evaluation process in Regional Planning: promises and problems in the case of France. *Journal of Environmental Assessment Planning & Management*, 2004, 6-4, pp.443 - 463. halshs-02544943

HAL Id: halshs-02544943

<https://halshs.archives-ouvertes.fr/halshs-02544943>

Submitted on 16 Apr 2020

HAL is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.

1 Journal of Environmental Assessment Policy and Management
 Vol. 6, No. 4 (December 2004) pp. 1–21
 3 © Imperial College Press



5 **INTEGRATION OF THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
 EVALUATION PROCESS IN REGIONAL PLANNING: PROMISES
 AND PROBLEMS IN THE CASE OF FRANCE**

7 FRANÇOIS BERTRAND* and CORINNE LARRUE†

Research Center “Ville Société Territoire”

9 *University of Tours, Citeres UMR CNRS no. 6173, France*

**bertrandfrancois@dcemail.com*

11 *†corinne.larrue@univ-tours.fr*

Received 30 December 2003

13 Revised 15 October 2004

Accepted 1 November 2004

15 The paper outlines how the sustainable regional development evaluation process is integrated
 17 within the planning and management cycle in the French context. Among the regions that
 have established reliable evaluation systems, some have tried to incorporate issues relating
 19 to sustainable development, thereby complying with European and national demands. But
 an overview of experiments made in the different French regions shows a wide variety
 of situations, with no single coordinated procedure allowing comparisons to be drawn.
 21 By way of example, the way this integration is implemented in the Nord-Pas-de-Calais
 region is presented. In this region, political backing, due largely to the presence of green
 23 representatives in the regional council, enabled considerable upstream work to be carried
 out, notably concerning strategic environmental evaluation and policy evaluation with regard
 25 to sustainable development. Finally, the paper presents the outcomes of the evaluation
 process with regard to sustainable regional development: an effect of inter-institutional
 27 decompartmentalisation leading to greater transversality have been noticed, as well as a
 process of an active awareness-raising. But a gap between technical and political levels is
 29 still noticeable.

31 *Keywords:* French regional planning; regional sustainable development; evaluation process;
 environmental assessment; structural funds.

Introduction

33 The new legal framework that structures French regional planning currently imposes
 a process of partnership between State administration and Regional governments,
 35 and to a lesser extent European and local institutions. It also provides incentives for

2 F. Bertrand & C. Larrue

1 a related process of evaluation at the three stages of the decision-making process
(*ex ante*, mid-term and *ex-post* evaluation).

3 The paper will outline (1) how the sustainable regional development evaluation
5 process is integrated within the planning and management cycle in the French con-
7 text; and (2) by way of example, the way this integration is implemented in the
9 Nord-Pas-de-Calais region;¹ and finally (3) the paper will present the outcomes of
the evaluation process with regard to sustainable regional development. The paper
will conclude with the difficulties of such an implementation process, which stem
mainly from a predominant technocracy and an inability to overcome “natural”
partitioning of the decision-making process.

11 In France, there is no specific, fixed and generally accepted idea about what
13 regional sustainable development is, and there is also no standardized and definitive
15 system to evaluate the contribution of regional policies aimed at sustainable devel-
17 opment. Sustainable development is therefore not a clear principle for action, but is
rather an ongoing attempt to reconcile environment and planning. The sustainable
development issue should therefore be seen more as a new form of “institutional
19 semantics” (Abélès, 1999) at the crossroads of a number of contemporary schools of
21 thought. With its many-sided nature encompassing conflicting positions, this issue
can be considered as “a new rhetorical resource” (Godard, 1994, p. 120), “a new
23 rational and peace-making myth” (Lascoumes, 2000), and a sort of “obligatory
gateway” in defining public policy (Rumpala, 2000). Finally, sustainable develop-
25 ment must also be seen as a “new professional ideology,” providing a large number
of actors (experts, assessors, administrators, politicians, etc.) with a new legiti-
27 macy for action (Reveret *et al.*, 1998; Lascoumes, 2000). Thus, rather than giving
a very precise predefined content to sustainability, we have looked at the form
the issues can take through the co-decision-making processes of regional planning
programmes.

29 **Regional Policies, Evaluation and Sustainable Development: The French Situation**

31 **The instruments of regional planning and the development of evaluation procedures**

33 In France, there are two co-existing systems of co-financed regional development
policies:

- 35 1. European policies relating to Structural Funds (formalized and finalized as a
single programming document – SPD).

¹This analysis was conducted within the frame of the thematic network REGIONET.

1 2. National planning policy, regionalized since the decentralization laws of
 3 1982–1983 (formalized and finalized as Planning Contracts between the State
 and the Regions – *CPER*² (Contrat de Plan entre l’Etat et les Régions)).

5 One of the objectives for the reform of the latest generation of CPERs was to
 achieve consistency and greater synergy between these two processes by merging
 the national schedule with that of the Structural Funds Programme.

7 In relation to these regional policies, the development of evaluation activities in
 the Regions started about 10 years ago as part of the French and European regional
 9 development programmes:

- 11 • At the national level through two separate memoranda in December 1993 calling
 for the development of evaluation³ and of environmental evaluation.⁴
- 13 • At the European level through the 1993 Structural Funds regulation⁵ stipulat-
 ing the requirement to carry out an *ex ante* evaluation of the proposed policies,
 15 particularly with regard to their potential environmental impact. This require-
 ment already existed under the first regulation of 1988 and had no real impact
 17 on how the first generation of Structural Funds (1988–1993) was managed, due
 to lack of time, experience and means. On the other hand, its reaffirmation and
 19 strengthening in 1993 acted as a powerful lever to the development of evaluation
 procedures in the Regions (Goybet, 1998).⁶

21 The 1994–1999 period thus constituted a phase of gradually setting up the eval-
 uation process, while the next period (2000–2006) should see the maturation of the
 procedures and practices. In the last 10 years, policy evaluation has been established
 23 relatively widely, if unevenly, in the Regions: many evaluation structures have been

²A Planning Contract has been signed between the State and each French Region.

³Memorandum of 9 December 1993 officially introducing regional evaluation procedures for moni-
 toring the State–Region Planning Contracts (CPER).

⁴Memorandum of the Minister for the Environment of 2 December 1993 introducing compulsory
 environmental monitoring of the Planning Contracts.

⁵EEC Resolution no. 2052/88 modified by EEC resolution no. 2081/93 concerning the assignment of
 Structural Funds, their effectiveness and coordination of their interventions (article 6). Regulation of
 Fund coordination: EEC resolution no. 4253/88 modified by EEC resolution no. 2082/93 (article 26).

⁶The lack of time and knowhow of many member States resulted in the absence of prior evaluation
 for the first European programmes benefiting from Structural Funds (1989–1993), and more generally
 in an embryonic evaluation procedure. The strengthening of the second European resolution (no.
 2081/93/CEE) with the introduction in particular of a conditionality clause (article 26: “. . . aid will
 be granted when *ex ante* appraisal shows the socio-economic advantages to be gained in the medium
 term, taking into account the resources mobilised”) constitutes “a powerful stimulus to spreading the
 idea that obligatory assessment was an indispensable step in receiving Community Funds” (Goybet
 1998).

4 *F. Bertrand & C. Larrue*

1 created, often attached to strategic management bodies responsible for planning and forecasting (Warin, 1999).

3 This development of regional public policy evaluation appears to be closely
 5 linked to the fact that development and planning policies are more and more sys-
 7 tematically designed and managed jointly. These multi-sectoral and co-financed
 9 policies are in fact more complex than traditional policies with a clearly identified
 11 leader. They are therefore more difficult to manage, supporting the need for an eval-
 13 uation process aimed at ensuring more rational and transparent management, i.e.
 15 ensuring a more even distribution of information to the various partners about policy
 objectives and implementation. European requirements for evaluation processes are
 much greater and more precise than those at the national level for the CPERs. This
 point can largely be explained by the fact that the European level is less involved
 with the implementation of its programmes and by the significantly larger number of
 contractors with whom the Commission must deal: Europe is further from the field
 and manages many more contracts, compensating for these management difficulties
 by making more demanding requests for information.

17 In this context, environmental issues of the 1970s and 1980s, followed by the goal
 of sustainable development in the 1990s, with the related leitmotiv of transversality
 19 and cross-sectorality, were particularly well developed in the following areas:

- 21 1. *Regional development*: This is shown in France by the many connections between
 regional development and the environment institutions, from the outset to the
 23 appointment of a Minister for Regional Development and the Environment
 between 1998 and 2001, and the adoption of a law for regional development
 in 1999 entitled “*Loi d’Orientation pour l’Aménagement et le Développement*
 25 *Durable du Territoire*” (Law for Sustainable Regional Development).
- 27 2. *Evaluation*: Seen particularly in the evaluation of the environmental impact of
 projects (Environmental Impact Assessment, EIA), initiated in 1976 in France
 and in 1985 at a European level (Dir 85/337/CE). It has more recently been
 29 extended to plans and programmes (Strategic Environmental Assessment, SEA –
 Dir 2001/42/CE) and to the recommendations for environmental assessment
 31 issued at Rio in 1992 (Principle No. 17⁷).

33 These close relationships between sustainable development, joint assessment and
 management make co-financed regional development and planning an ideal basis
 to observe how regional policies relating to sustainable development are assessed

⁷“Environmental impact assessment, as a national instrument, shall be undertaken for proposed activi-
 ties that are likely to have a significant adverse impact on the environment and are subject to a decision
 of a competent national authority.” (Rio Declaration on the environment and development, United
 Nations, June 1992.)

1 in practice, even if similar procedures exist at infra-regional (local authorities) and
urban levels (especially in the framework of the LA21).

3 **The variety of regional situations**

5 Among the regions that have established reliable evaluation systems, some have
tried to incorporate issues relating to sustainable development, thereby complying
with European and national demands. These experimental procedures have not been
7 totally successful, except where there was already a certain acculturation towards
sustainable development issues. In other cases, preparation of the new program-
9 ming period (2000–2006) has provided a starting point for regional procedures for
integrating sustainable development.

11 An overview of experiments made in different French regions shows a wide
variety of situations, with no single coordinated procedure allowing comparisons
13 to be drawn. This is also the case in almost all European countries, as has been
shown through the work carried out within the Regionet framework. Sustainable
15 regional development procedures thus differ widely, and evaluation methods do
not allow inter-regional comparisons. The harmonisation and centralisation role
17 that should be ensured by State departments is very inadequately fulfilled (lack of
comparable data, shortage of information about the various regional approaches and
19 actions, etc.).

A national framework

21 In a memorandum of 11 May 1999, the Minister for the Environment laid down the
possible forms of regional development programmes with a sustainable develop-
23 ment objective. This statutory text, aimed at regulating the State–Region Planning
Contracts also affects European programmes for regional development benefiting
25 from Structural Funds (SPD), due to the overlap of the two procedures. A method
has been proposed giving a broad panel of possible sustainability indicators.

27 The list of criteria given for setting up a process of evaluation and indicators
focuses particularly on environmental aspects by setting them apart from other
29 economic and social factors and from decision-making processes (Brodhag and
Davoine, 2001) (cf. Table 1).

31 The approach chosen focuses mainly on improving methods for selecting public
actions, by setting up broader regional diagnostic systems (especially the Regional
33 Environmental Profile) and reliable evaluation methods for actions to be taken
(matrix evaluation and indicators). This evaluation system is designed both as
35 a decision-making help and as a management, monitoring and assessment tool.
However, the different texts are much less explicit about how these tools are to
37 be implemented, and the regulatory provisions are stated more as suggestions

Table 1. The fields of evaluation according to the memorandum of 11 May 1999.

(a) Draw up an analysis grid for sustainable development

- Time aspect
- Territorial aspect
- Social factor
- Economic aspect
- Management
- Consultation and participation
- Monitoring and planning

(b) Strengthen environmental performance

- land occupation
- Land use
- Waste
- Risks
- Water
- Air
- Preservation of biodiversity
- Life-styles

(c) Initiating policy monitoring indicators

- Transport
 - Natural and rural areas
 - Energy
 - Teaching and research
-

Source: Memorandum of MATE of 11 May 1999 from Brodhag and Davoine (2001).

1 than as requirements. In any event, the main emphasis is on recalling the prior-
 3 ities to be respected in the programmes selected for appraisal, i.e. employment,
 mutual responsibility and sustainable development, plus the impact of the green-
 5 house effect,⁸ as stated in the Prime Minister's memorandum of 25 August 2000
 devoted to "implementing the evaluation of contracting procedures for the period
 2000–2006."

7 In parallel, a national initiative, more specifically directed towards environ-
 9 mental actions, was launched in connection with the 20 August 2001 circu-
 lar, devoted to the mid-term evaluation of the State–Region Planning Contracts
 and Single Programming Documents, and to the environmental monitoring of pro-
 11 grammes and measures ("mesures"). This memorandum has a general objective of

⁸This issue was introduced into the negotiations later through a memorandum of the Ministry of the Environment of 27 August 1999.

1 sustainable development, and therefore adopts a more pragmatic position, putting
 forward a more realistic method of what should be covered in an environmental
 3 assessment. This method is based on three points, of which the first two should
 have been put into effect when the memorandum was published (which was far
 5 from being the case in the Regions):

1. *Diagnosis of the environmental issues in the region* resulting from the Regional
 7 Environmental Profile (REP) and the regional contribution to the public service
 plan for natural and rural areas (SSCENR): this constitutes both an initial state of
 9 the environment in the region, providing a benchmark for future assessments, and
 a synthesis of the specific environmental issues at the regional and infra-regional
 11 levels.
2. An *ex ante environmental evaluation* carried out during the preparation of the
 13 State–Region contracts and programmes applying for Structural Funds. This
 evaluation is an indispensable prerequisite for all other mid-term evaluation
 15 procedures.
3. *The dashboard for environmental monitoring* of CPER actions and European
 17 programmes.

Under the heading of “dashboard for monitoring actions with environmental
 19 impact,” the third point includes both monitoring environmental programmes and
 monitoring the effects on the environment of other programmes. It heralds the estab-
 21 lishment of a monitoring and assessment tool combining all the financial, production
 and result indicators for environmental programmes in a computer model called
 23 OSEE (*Outil de Suivi pour l’Evaluation Environnementale*). Having identified
 the procedures and actions that are likely to require monitoring because of their
 25 serious effect on the environment, it also proposes the indicators and potential eco-
 conditional criteria relevant to the environmental concerns of the region, based on
 27 national recommendations. As noted above, the tone is more one of invitation and
 suggestion than authoritarian obligation.

29 **Evaluating Co-financed Regional Programmes: The Example of the Nord-Pas-de-Calais Region**

31 By way of example, we present below the results of these procedures in a French
 region that has been a pioneer in this domain — the Nord-Pas-de-Calais. In this
 33 Region, political backing, due largely to the presence of green representatives in
 the regional council, enabled considerable upstream work to be carried out, notably
 35 concerning strategic environmental evaluation and policy evaluation with regard to
 sustainable development (Region Nord-Pas-de-Calais, 2004).

8 *F. Bertrand & C. Larrue*

1 The *Nord-Pas-de-Calais* region is a pioneer in France for its integration of envi-
3 ronmentally related and sustainable development issues. In 1996, it initiated dis-
5 cussion between the Departments of the Regional Council and the State about the
7 issue of evaluating environmentally related regional policy. Between 1997 and 1999
9 it carried out a methodological study into evaluating the impact of the actions of
11 the Planning Contract. Inter-departmental work, begun in 1999 within the Regional
13 Council with the help of an outside consultant, led to the drawing-up of an analysis
15 matrix for regional policy composed of 30 criteria, each one accompanied by a
17 series of questions. After an experimental stage, the associated questions were cut
19 down and simplified to make the matrix easy to manage and use. Table 2 gives the
21 list of 30 indicators on this matrix dating from 2001. Using this matrix, specific
23 regional policies could be analysed. It also made it possible to assess the extent to
25 which the different items in the grid appeared in the regional system for monitoring
27 the Planning Contract in the Region.

15 Similarly, the evaluation programme of the Nord-Pas-de-Calais CPER with
17 regard to sustainable development planned for the 2000–2006 period appears to
19 be extremely well developed compared to other French Regions (cf. Box 1).

19 From the outset, the acculturation, sensitisation and accountability of all the
21 staff involved in the regional programmes affected by the evaluation system (inter-
23 departmental consultation and transversality) were seen as playing as important a
25 role in the procedure as the actual official results of the appraisal.

23 More precisely, for the SPD, the programming supplement specifies the exact
25 conditions for implementing and allocating the Funds. Sustainable Development
27 indicators are found under “Procedures,” in a paragraph concerning the respect of
29 sustainable development issues and equal opportunities. The sustainable indicator(s)
31 chosen has/have a bearing either on equal opportunities, or on the environment,
33 or both.

29 Next, project-selection criteria, particularly environmental, are introduced at the
31 level of “Sub-procedures.” The importance of each “eco-conditional” criterion is
33 indicated by different status: “priority,” “financial bonus” — covering the extra cost
35 of integrating the environment (such as application of the HEQ (High Environmental
37 Quality) standard for building projects) — or “conditional” (in italics in Table 3).

33 The two procedures converge to a certain extent, if only in the structure of
35 the European (SPD) and national (CPER) programming documents. This common
37 structure facilitates simultaneous reading of these programmes, which are frequently
39 difficult to follow. The same phenomenon can be observed with regard to the eval-
uation systems that have been set up: the simultaneous preparation of the various
programmes, and the fact that certain State departments managed both procedures,
provide a certain consistency in the way they are written, particularly by using many

Table 2. Analysis matrix showing the coherency of regional policies with sustainable development – Regional council of Nord-Pas-de-Calais.

Meeting human needs

1. Improving the quality of services and facilities
2. Making services and facilities available for all departments
3. Personal responsibility and autonomy
4. Increasing community spirit within the target population
5. Personal qualifications and social integration
6. Diversification of socio-cultural activities
7. Consideration of spatial equity
8. Consideration of long-term needs
9. Fight against poverty
10. Consideration of social costs

Management of the environment

11. Controlling non-renewable resources
12. Limiting pollution and nuisances
13. Enhancing natural wealth and biodiversity
14. Controlling urban spread
15. Developing clean and simple technology, and/or quality-controlled products
16. Observing and anticipating events
17. Accounting for environmental costs

Economic development

18. Improving economic production and better distribution of capital gains
19. Strengthening employment assets
20. Developing “community business”
21. Instigating and developing alternative economy initiatives
22. Diversifying economic activities
23. Looking for better control of expenses

Participation/governance

24. Citizens’ involvement, and recognition of their contribution
 25. Setting up diagnostic procedures prior to action
 26. Experience-sharing between actors and pooling of knowledge
 27. Matching means with actors; non-competitive actions
 28. Qualifications of partners and long-lasting partnerships
 29. Recognizing all skills within the region (transversality) during programming, implementation and monitoring phases
 30. Implementing the evaluation procedure and taking account of the results
-

Source: DPE, Regional council Nord-Pas-de-Calais, April 2001.

- 1 of the same results and performance indicators for SPD and CPER. One could think that having the same indicators would be an obvious requirement for a minimum

Box 1 Evaluation programme in the Nord-Pas-de-Calais region.

1

In the Nord-Pas-de-Calais region, evaluation is carried out in partnership with the State and the two departments who signed the Planning Contract. The evaluation is common to different partners; one evaluation structure bringing together the State, the regions and the two departments has thus been created (...)

A multi-year evaluation programme of the Planning Contract was drawn up for the years 2001–2003 and 2004–2006. It comprises four types of work:

- Transversal evaluations with regard to the four selected priorities: the environment, social equity, employment and territorialisation.
- Thematic evaluations of an objective or means of action: for the 2001–2003 programme, this involved business creation and transmission, tourism, water and agriculture, community actions for export. These choices were accepted by all the partners, with a different leading house for each theme: the Pas-de-Calais department for tourism, the Nord department for water and agriculture, the State for business creation and transmission and the Region for export. Other themes were chosen for 2004–2006: technology transfer, new IT and communication techniques, regional urban policy, intermodal transport.
- Evaluation of a major operation. For 2001–2003 the following themes were selected: “summer quarters” (promotion of social and cultural activities) and cyber-centres. For 2004–2006 the planned theme is the evaluation of the European multimodal platform at Dourges.
- Methodological work aimed at improving evaluation. This involves in particular improving the reliability of indicators and interlinking data bases.

3 Extracts from report to the National Assembly on the evaluation of public policies and indicators of SD (Duron, 2002).

5 of rationality. However, it represents a major advance compared on previous practices.

7 The analysis carried out here is based on the evaluation systems as they have
 9 been proposed, and our work did not concern their effective implementation, i.e.
 11 their operational level. The *ex post* evaluation, will show how realistic the proposed
 13 systems are. However, the fact that the management system of the CPER goes into
 15 less detail and does not include eco-conditional criteria as such does not mean
 17 that it should be judged as being less effective, or as being less concerned with
 19 sustainability than the system set up for the Structural Funds. What the European
 assessment system gains in precision it loses in inflexibility.

15 In the same way, the appropriation of the evaluation system by the actors respon-
 17 sible for the programmes represents one of the advantages, if not the greatest, of
 19 setting up a procedure for evaluating respect for sustainable development. It also
 constitutes an essential guarantee of the effectiveness of the assessment procedure
 itself (information derived from indicators, etc.). In this context, while the Euro-
 pean evaluation system seems to be more finely tuned and formalized, it is also

Table 3. Extract of the assessment and monitoring tool of the SPD (Single Programming Document) Objective1 (Phasing Out) of the Nord-Pas-de-Calais Region for the period 2000–2006.

Example: Line of Action III — Redefining and enhancing the region

Sub-axis 3: Enhancement of tourism and culture

Procedure 7 — Attraction for tourism

One indicator of main result

Sustainable development Indicators:

- Number of operations complying with the European charter of sustainable development
- *Number of projects incorporating environmental concerns*

Sub-Procedure 7.1: Development of tourism facilities of regional interest

One indicator of main result, five indicators of additional results, One performance indicator:

Criteria for selecting operations: The accepted projects should:

- Be the subject of a general agreement and be consistent with and complementary to other projects in the area
- Be the driving force of endogenous development and exemplary in terms of sustainable development (respect of the environment, all-year, etc.)
- Create activities and jobs
- Provide proof of their viability (market research, etc.)
- Open to the widest possible range of clients including the most disadvantaged

Environmental criteria: In order to improve the environmental quality of the tourism facilities, the following should be encouraged:

- Incentives for projects respecting the environment through exceptional actions (HEQ standards, etc.) (Financial bonus)
 - Respect for local architecture and natural heritage, and quality of surrounding landscape (*Priority*)
 - Operations in Natural Park area which comply with the European Charter of Sustainable Tourism (*Eligibility a priori*)
 - Conservation of natural areas (*Conditional eligibility*)
-

Source: Programme supplement of SPD Objective 1 transitional support — Nord-Pas-de-Calais.

- 1 more mandatory and tightly controlled, which provides less incentive for sharing
and working in partnership. The CPER management may be less detailed, but it is
3 perhaps better adapted, more appropriate and realistic, and therefore more effective.

Links between European and national procedures

- 5 At the regional level, the regional State departments represent the *institutional link*
between the two procedures, because they are the only instructing departments com-
7 mon to the Structural Funds and the CPER. There is therefore an indirect influence
between the Regions and Europe, with State departments as mediators, hence the
9 strategic importance of their involvement.

12 *F. Bertrand & C. Larrue*

1 Another category of actors involved in the evaluation and integration of sustain-
 3 able development, not shown in Table 3, but who play a key role in acculturation
 and in disseminating a common doctrine, are the *experts* (academics and more
 5 especially consultants). In response to requests from the funding organisations,
 they fulfil a popularisation and coordination role within departments. It is often the
 7 same experts who are called upon by both the Regional State departments and the
 Regional Council, thereby fulfilling the important role of bringing the two together.
 Moreover, their influence lies also in carrying out a linking and capitalisation func-
 9 tion between the different Regions. Thus, they have both an *inter-institutional role*
of harmonising the different procedures at a regional level and an *inter-regional*
 11 *role of disseminating and sharing* regional experiences.

Finally, “bridging structures,” by coordinating and putting forward ideas, have an
 13 acculturation and mediation function at the regional level about the issue of sustain-
 able development. These structures can be para-regional (such as the ARPE —
 15 Regional Environment Agency⁹ — which represents the Regional Council of
 Midi-Pyrénées, and the RAEE — Rhône-Alpes Energie Environnement¹⁰)¹¹ or
 17 bipartite, shared by the State and the Regions (such as the CERDD — Sustain-
 able Development Resource Centre — in Nord-Pas-de-Calais¹²).

19 **Linking the evaluations made at different times**

Ideally, a well-carried out *ex ante* evaluation, providing information about the initial
 21 state and elements for measuring the desired progress or possible negative impacts,
 largely determines the course of the other assessment phases. Surveys carried out
 23 in 2000, 2001 and 2002 (cf. Table 4) showed that not all the French Regions had
 at their disposal *ex ante* evaluation processes for the environment, even though the
 25 programmes were already well underway. The mid-term evaluations currently being
 carried out simultaneously for the European and national programmes may allow a
 27 harmonisation of the situation.

A closer look at the regional preparation period of the CPER and SPD
 29 (1999–2000) shows that it was an extremely busy period in terms of regional devel-
 opment: in addition to these two programmes, other regional planning documents
 31 with indicative goals were being prepared (National plans for collective services
 such as transportation, rural areas, etc. — *Schémas de Services Collectifs, SSC* — by

⁹ Agence Régionale Pour l’Environnement, www.arpe-mip.com.

¹⁰ www.raee.org.

¹¹ About 10 such regional agencies exist in France, grouped together in the RARE — *Réseau des Agences Régionales de l’Energie et de l’Environnement* — (Network of Regional Energy and Environment Agencies); www.rare.asso.fr.

¹² *Centre Ressource du Développement Durable*, www.cerdd.org.

Table 4. Progress of preliminary environmental evaluation of the CPER 2000–2006 (data collected in 2000 & 2002).

Production of the PER (Regional Environmental Profiles — environmental appraisal)		
	Beginning of 2000	End of 2002
Alsace	In progress	In progress
Aquitaine	No	In progress
Auvergne	In progress	× (2000)
B ^{sc} -Normandie	× (12/99) *	× (2001)
Bourgogne		× (2001)
Bretagne	SSCENR diagnosis	× (2000)
Centre	In progress	× (2000)
Champagne-A.	SSCENR diagnosis	× (2002)
Corse		
Franche-Comté	In progress	
H ^c -Normandie	In progress	× (2000)
Île-de-France	No	
Languedoc-R.		× (2001)
Limousin	× (07/99) *	×
Lorraine	× (04/00) *	×
Midi-Pyrénées	SSCENR diagnosis	In progress
Nord-Pas-de-Calais	In progress	× (2000)
P.A.C.A.	Diagnosis of 2 DTA	×
Pays de la Loire	In progress	In progress
Picardie	In progress	× (2001)
Poitou-Charentes	Internal diagnosis	
Rhône-Alpes		× (2000)

Key: Shaded portions are regions where several elements indicate that a region has initiated a drive towards environmental evaluation.

*“Pilot” regions drawing up PER with three separate consultancies (Lerond, Adage environnement et BCEOM).

Source: First column at beginning of 2000 (Bertrand, 2000, p. 25) after telephone survey of the Diren, Sgar and Regional Councils (February–March 2000). Empty boxes indicate the Diren could not be contacted. Second column at end of 2002 (Adage Environnement, 2002).

SSCENR, Schéma de Services Collectifs des Espaces Naturels et Ruraux (Collective National Plan for Natural and Rural areas).

- 1 the Regional State departments, and Regional Plans for territorial planning — *Sché-*
- 3 *mas Régionaux d’Aménagement et de Développement du Territoire, SRADT* — by
- 5 the Regional councils). This situation led to a trend of “administrative recycling,”
- 7 particularly for regional environmental appraisals: once these have been carried
- out sufficiently for the SSC, they can be used as a Regional Environmental Profile
- (*Profil Environnemental Régional — PER*), a synthetic and strategic appraisal of
- the regional environmental situation required for preparation of the CPER. This
- “administrative recycling” trend was evidently used to the full between the regional

14 *F. Bertrand & C. Larrue*

1 preparation of the CPER and the SPD, mainly, but not only, going in the direc-
tion from the Planning Contract to the SPD.^{13,14} It was also used for forthcoming
3 documents (e.g. SSCENR — National plan for rural areas – and SRADT).

5 **Environmental assessment as a driving force for the evaluation of sustainable development**

7 As a direct consequence of the limited development of environmental assessment
during the period 1994–1999, integrating environmental assessment into regional
and development strategies remains very limited. This limited development was
9 due to the lack of useful information available at the right time. Thus, when look-
ing at Table 4 for the beginning of 2000, it can be seen that only three PERs
11 had been produced in time to play a real role in drawing up regional strate-
gies (which does not mean that they actually did so), having received specific
13 support for this purpose.¹⁵ However, a less formal analysis shows that eight out
of 18 regions questioned had in fact carried out an environmental appraisal, if
15 sometimes limited or incomplete.

17 However, Table 4 shows the extent to which environmental appraisal has been
carried out in various regional situations, and at the same time indicates a significant
gap between the time the decision was made and approved and when the documents
19 for the preliminary environmental assessment were drawn up (sometimes a gap of
several years). This situation is not unique to the programmes studied, and is to
21 be found in most strategic environmental evaluation procedures. At the practical
level, all our observations lead to the conclusion that there is a flagrant gap between
23 evaluation and decision, i.e. between the evaluation processes and the decision
processes which they are supposed to inform (Lascoumes, 1999, p. 24).

25 However, it is also important not to overlook the fact that this first full-scale
trial of environmental assessment has provided an opportunity to set up a package
27 of new measures, collaboration and approaches aimed at improving the integration
of environmental concerns into regional development policies. This trend seems to
29 have got off to a slow start, to a greater or lesser extent and in varying forms accord-
ing to the region. A large number of diagnostic documents have been, or are being
31 produced, indicating that environmental assessment is coming into being in the form
of administrative documents, in general with these having no direct influence on

¹³Thus, in Nord-Pas-de-Calais, the earlier preparation of SPD Objective 1 was able to be used in some preparatory work for the Plan contract.

¹⁴Thus, in Nord-Pas-de-Calais, the earlier preparation of SPD Objective 1 was able to be used in some preparatory work for the Plan contract.

¹⁵The three regions were those chosen as pilots to test this first preliminary environmental evaluation system.

1 the decision-making process. However, an indirect effect can occur via the actors
 2 involved in the evaluation process (educational self-learning function¹⁶). This envi-
 3 ronmental evaluation experience will undoubtedly allow: (1) a greater visibility at
 4 a political level of the environmental concerns and issues; (2) clarification of hazily
 5 perceived issues; (3) recognition of new areas of intervention, up to now largely
 6 ignored; (4) approval of new public actions taken for newly identified problems.
 7 Environmental evaluation could thus fulfil a role in the emergence, construction
 8 and legitimisation of new issues (Bertrand, 1999). The development of evaluation
 9 procedures could thus help endorse the implementation of environmental policies,
 10 by justifying their necessity (Lascoumes, 1994), particularly by raising the aware-
 11 ness of the actors involved.

12 For the moment, the two procedures of decision-making and evaluation appear to
 13 have no formal connection. The circulars dated 11 May 1999 (Minister of the Envi-
 14 ronment) and 25 August 2000 (Prime Minister) lay down, respectively, the form of
 15 environmental assessment and the general evaluation of the CPER, while the CPER
 16 were actually prepared between July 1998 and July 1999, mainly at the beginning
 17 of 1999. Additions to the programme detailing the implementation and follow-up
 18 of the contracts were drawn up in 2000.

19 However, experience shows that if assessment practice and skills are well devel-
 20 oped, they can play a significant role, together with the departments involved, when
 21 a suitable event endorses and legitimises it.¹⁷

The Effects of the Evaluation Process on Planning Exercises

23 The dynamics of implementing regional development programme assessment relat-
 24 ing to the environment and sustainable development have produced institutional
 25 innovations. These may be formal, such as the creation of new structures within
 26 departments for assessing the environment and/or sustainable development. They
 27 can also be innovations in how funded actions are handled, such as the adoption of
 eco-conditional criteria in SPD objective 1 for the Nord-Pas-de-Calais.

¹⁶“(…) the contribution of the evaluation is more marked and deeper at an administrative level: as a means of clarifying the issues; as a broader reflection of fragmented public action; as a space for confronting isolated rationalities; even as a means of instigating cooperation, always called for and rarely seen. For most administrative agents involved in the evaluation, there is a strong impression of learning and of a relatively irreversible trend forwards.” (Lascoumes and Setbon, 1996, pp. 61–62.)

¹⁷This was the case, for example, when the first reading of the Docup Objective 1 was turned down by the European Commission in Nord-Pas-de-Calais, leading to the monitoring and assessment procedure for the environment to be expanded.

1 An effect of cross-sectoral integration (within an organisation)

2 These institutional innovations are essentially informal, with cross-sectorality, even
3 temporary, brought about by the transversality required in practice to draw up
4 common points of reference and establish indicators for several areas of action.
5 Due to the scope of the issues dealt with, the technical preparation of the regional
6 planning exercises by programmes such as the SF and the CPER require in depth
7 consultation between departments. When the contribution of policies concerning
8 sustainable development has to be evaluated, many questions are raised and discus-
9 sion can no longer be carried out on a sectoral basis. It thus becomes essential to
10 learn to work together, to analyse potential actions from different perspectives and
11 understand the constraints of other departments. In practice, these transversality
12 exercises often prove to be as enriching as they are difficult, arousing a reaction
13 and the interest of the staff concerned. It therefore constitutes a process of *active
awareness-raising*.

14 On this point, the involvement of different instructing departments is decisive.
15 While access to outside consultants can lead to improved coordination, contracting
16 out the work of defining the relevant features and indicators will not have the same
17 impact at all in terms of inter-departmental coordination or the staff's eventual
18 appropriation and involvement in the sustainable development issues.

19 With regard to setting up the evaluation system for the CPERs and SPDs for
20 the 2000–2006 period, success in integrating features linked to sustainable devel-
21 opment depended to a large extent on the level of regional involvement in the issue
22 that already existed. Unprepared departments sometimes perceived the injunction
23 for sustainable development, which arrived with no explanation or discussion, as
24 a hollow imposition. However, the amount of work involved in preparing the pro-
25 gramme and the high profile given to the issue of sustainable development resulted
26 in a raising of awareness and the instigation of discussions around the subject of
27 how sustainable development could be incorporated into actions undertaken.

28 Inter-departmental decompartmentalization could be more difficult for the State
29 departments, which are essentially organized vertically, than for the Regional Coun-
30 cil departments, which are de facto less compartmentalized and more integrated.
31 These difficulties have been particularly acute for the most autarkic bodies, which
32 are not used to cross-sectorality (e.g. state education), and which can see the intru-
33 sion of other concerns into their policies as a loss of authority.

34 The awareness-raising and internal training of staff involved may appear the
35 most significant outcome in setting up the evaluation measures and procedures.
36 As a result, the ability to develop policies is modified, with a trend towards
37 those policies that are more appraising and have incorporated environmental
38 concerns.
39

1 **The effect of inter-institutional decompartmentalisation leading**
 2 **to greater transversality**

3 The very nature of jointly run development policies can lead to inter-institutional
 4 decompartmentalisation. The assessment of programmes such as the CPER is nec-
 5 essarily carried out in partnership. Assessment of the Structural Funds proves to
 6 be significantly less open, as it is carried out within the regional State departments
 7 alone.

8 **An absence of vertical integration**

9 With regard to the evaluation process, there seems to be virtually no vertical integra-
 10 tion. The movement seems to be top-down, with more or less authoritarian duties
 11 imposed by the upper levels (obligations of the European Commission, suggestions
 12 from the State). After that, the upper levels only intervene to check the progress
 13 at mid-term. Thus, the role of the upper levels of coordinating, centralizing and
 14 disseminating good practices appears to be only partially fulfilled. Moreover, the
 15 responsibility for assessing national and European regional development policies
 16 is different in the two bodies.¹⁸ To lessen the impact of these points, a public
 17 policy assessment website has been created on the joint initiative of these two
 18 bodies.¹⁹

19 **The hypothetical public participation**

20 With regard to public participation, there is not at the moment any real association
 21 of inhabitants for these procedures at the regional level. Moreover, there does not
 22 seem to be any real involvement as yet as a result of disseminating the assessment
 23 results. However, this point is linked to the complexity of implementing these pro-
 24 grammes and to the strategic level in which they have become established. However,
 25 in some Regions there have been consultation experiences prior to preparation of the
 26 CPERs, often just basic information-giving sessions, but sometimes more (regional
 27 conferences, opinion polls, electronic forums, etc.). To conclude, public participa-
 28 tion is still almost non-existent (at best it is limited to information). There is no real
 29 translation of discussion about citizenship and governance into concrete actions.

¹⁸Evaluation of the regional policies funded by SF is coordinated by the Delegation for Regional Development and Regional Affairs (*Datar*) while assessment of the CPERs is under the responsibility of the *Commissariat Général au Plan* — (CGP).

¹⁹<http://www.evaluation.gouv.fr>. Its objective is to “facilitate access to the greatest number (actors in assessment, the media, researchers, general public) to all the assessment data produced by public bodies.”

18 *F. Bertrand & C. Larrue*

1 **Bridging the gap between technical and political levels: the necessary
political support or technocratic drift**

3 The linkage between evaluation procedures for sustainable development at technical
and political levels is different from region to region and seems to depend largely
5 on the political support for the procedure:

- 7 1. If elected representatives have initiated or are interested in this linkage, the
dynamics are bound to be strong. Bridges will be built between the work carried
9 out at a technical level and discussions being held at a political level, and the
dynamics of each group will feed the other. It will then be possible to see a
11 real process of regional appropriation by the elected representatives and by the
technicians (as in the Nord-Pas-de-Calais region).
- 13 2. On the other hand, if the elected representatives do not really believe in it, or view
the procedure with a kindly but distant eye, letting it be because they have no
15 choice, but showing no particular interest, then there will be no bridge between
the technical and political levels. There is then a real risk that the procedure will
17 fall into a technocratic ghetto. There can be no solid assessment procedure for
sustainable development without political support.

19 Moreover, the closeness between elected representatives and technicians in the
regional authorities does not necessarily facilitate the development of evaluation
21 processes, if there is not a solid support from elected representatives. In general,
as this is still frequently seen as an inconvenient and dangerous control tool, its
23 development is therefore viewed with reticence. On the other hand, this phenomenon
is much less apparent within the regional state departments, where this is greater
25 distance from elected representatives. They therefore have much greater autonomy
in setting up evaluation procedures, especially with regard to the environment and
sustainable development.

27 The question therefore concerns the issue of appropriating sustainable develop-
ment, at the level of both elected representatives and departments. The ideal objec-
29 tive is that this appropriation be collective and shared. However, the underlying
institutional and political stakes direct the process towards competitive appropria-
31 tion (between departments and between regional authorities). One of the main issues
at stake in evaluation is thus to allow the decompartmentalization at work during the
33 conception of joint development policies to continue during their implementation.

Conclusion

35 **A learning tool**

37 The widespread application of the partnership process in designing regional devel-
opment policies involves disseminating and developing the evaluation process as an

1 indispensable management tool. Joint planning thus involves evaluation. Analysing
the experiences of taking sustainable development into account in assessment pro-
3 cedures shows that these procedures appear to be formative in terms both of sus-
tainable development and of evaluation. Assessment of sustainable development
5 is thus valuable as a learning tool from two points of view: on the one hand, by
making regional policy managers aware of and responsible for sustainable develop-
7 ment and its implications in the programmes to be implemented; and on the other
hand, by taking assessment away from the departments specialised in forecasting
9 and strategies and giving it to all the institutions making up the regional system.

**Sustainable development evaluation: a recent movement strongly
11 associated to environmental sector**

13 In France, regional evaluation and planning procedures for sustainable development
are still at an exploratory and experimental stage. The system for managing these
practices is recent and still being set up. The involvement of several political and/or
15 administrative actors as leaders seems to be a determining factor. In the same way,
linking and coordination functions rely heavily on the role of the experts involved
17 in the process.

The French regions do not have many environmental powers but ensure a variety
19 of coordination, support and experimentation activities in relation to sustainable
development. To a large extent, these actions are closely linked to the domains of the
environment. Similarly, national policy with regard to sustainable development was
21 set up relatively late, and its institutionalisation has been very tightly associated with
the environment sector (ministry). The ministerial naming game has thus passed the
23 environment from the ministry of “Regional Development and the Environment”
25 (1997–2002) to that of “Ecology and Sustainable Development.” More recently
(July 2004), an inter-ministerial delegation responsible for sustainable development
27 has been created within the government.

Work carried out within the Regionet framework has highlighted that this close
29 institutional proximity between environment and sustainable development is not
unique to France and is to be found to a greater or lesser extent in the other European
31 countries. Likewise, Regionet’s work has highlighted the importance of the role of
experts and intermediary actors in establishing the regional dynamics of sustainable
33 development, and the importance of the human factor and regional specificities
(wealth and identity aspects specific to the regions). Finally, the overall work has
35 highlighted the role of coordination and awareness-raising fulfilled by the evaluation
processes.

37 Think Globally?

39 In this new and fragile context of the steps taken so far, the extraterritorial dimen-
sion, which constitutes an important aspect of the spatialisation of the sustainable

20 F. Bertrand & C. Larrue

1 development issue (Zuindeau, 2000), seems barely to have been integrated. We
 2 remain very close to the concept of endogenous development, and other extraterri-
 3 torial actors appear to have been largely overlooked in the assessment process. The
 4 question therefore remains as to whether the assessment process can overcome the
 5 serious difficulties concerning the integration of actors who do not have any direct
 6 representation, and become a forum where the interests of “weak” actors, such as
 7 future generations, non-human species and exogenous actors, can be represented.
 8 The answers to this question will depend largely on the political importance given
 9 to these actors.

References

- 11 Abeles, M (1999). Pour une exploration des sémantiques institutionnelles. In *Ethnolo-*
 12 *gie Française*, Les mots des institutions, Tome XXIX, Vol. 4, octobre–décembre,
 13 pp. 501–512.
- 14 Adage Environnement (2002). *Elaboration des enjeux environnementaux des Profils Envi-*
 15 *ronnementaux Régionaux*, MEDD-D4E, Novembre 2002, 44 pp. + annexes.
- 16 Bertrand, F (1999). *L'évaluation environnementale ex ante: outil d'aide à la déci-*
 17 *sion et facteur d'intégration de l'environnement dans les pratiques et les concepts*
 18 *d'aménagement du territoire? L'exemple de l'évaluation environnementale stratégique*
 19 *pour la préparation des Contrats de Plan Etat-Région 2000–2006*. Mémoire de D.E.A.,
 20 Maison des Sciences de la Ville, Université François Rabelais de Tours, 107 pp. +
 21 annexes.
- 22 Bertrand, F (2000). *L'évaluation environnementale stratégique des programmes de planifi-*
 23 *cation régionale. Analyse du cadre réglementaire français et européens*, 10 pp. com-
 24 munication présentée au 5^{ème} colloque des spécialistes en évaluation d'impacts à Paris
 25 les 22, 23 & 24 mai 2000.
- 26 Brodhag, C and P Davoine (2001). Evaluation, rationalité et développement durable. In
 27 *Evaluation et gouvernance*, M Basle and C Guignard-Hamon (eds.) pp. 241–254.
 28 Société Française d'Evaluation, Actes du colloque de Rennes de juin 2000, Imprimerie
 29 de l'Université de Rennes 1. (www.agora21.org).
- 30 Duron, P (2002). *L'évaluation des politiques publiques et les indicateurs du développement,*
 31 *rapport no. 3594 fait au nom de la Délégation à l'Aménagement et au Développement*
 32 *Durable du Territoire*, enregistré le 12 février 2002 à la Présidence de l'Assemblée
 33 Nationale (disponible en ligne <http://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/rap-info/i3594.asp>).
- 34 Godard, O (1994). Développement durable: paysage intellectuel. *Natures-Sciences-*
 35 *Sociétés*, 4(2), 309–322.
- 36 Goybet, P (1998). Le développement de l'évaluation au niveau communautaires. Enjeux et
 37 perspectives. In *Revue d'Economie Régionale et Urbaine no. 3*, pp. 357–368. Évalua-
 38 tion des politiques publiques territoriales.
- 39 Lascoumes, P (1994). *L'éco-pouvoir, environnements et politiques*. Paris: L'Harmattan.

- 1 Lascoumes, P (1999). Les nouvelles modalités de la décision publique dans le domaine de
l'environnement et la place de l'évaluation environnementale des plans et programmes.
3 In *Amenagement & Nature*, pp. 24–26. Evaluation environnementale des plans et pro-
grammes, Actes du colloque d'Angers 10–11 septembre 1998, no. 134, septembre
5 1999.
- Lascoumes, P (2000). *Les ambiguïtés des politiques de développement durable*. Université
7 de tous les savoirs, conférence no. 293, tome 5, éditions Odile Jacob, Paris.
- Lascoumes, P and Setbon (1996). *L'évaluation pluraliste des politiques publiques. Enjeux,
9 pratiques et produits*, Groupe d'Analyse des Politiques Publiques — C.N.R.S., Com-
missariat Général du Plan, 182 pp.
- 11 Region Nord-Pas-de-Calais (2004). *Le développement durable en question*. Etudes Prospec-
tives Régionales no. 8, mai 2004, 101 pp.
- 13 Reveret, J-P, L Doran, and L Ghanime, (1998). *Biodiversity, other diversities and the
case for environmental assessment*. Communication présentée au 18^{ème} congrès de
15 l'Association International pour l'Evaluation d'Impact, Christchurch, New Zealand,
CD ROM IAIA Conferences 1997, 1998, 15 pp.
- 17 Rumpala, Y (2000), *Voies et ambiguïtés du repositionnement de la régulation publique face
au développement durable. Esquisses d'analyses à partir du cas français*. Intervention
19 du 07/12/2000 au Séminaire Interdisciplinaire sur le Développement Durable, Lille,
22 pp. (www.revue-ddt.org).
- 21 Warin, P (1999). *L'évaluation en région, prisme d'une maturation politique et administra-
tive*. CERAT/CNRS — Institut d'Etudes Politiques de Grenoble, 232 pp.
- 23 Zuindeau, B (ed.) (2000). *Développement durable & Territoires*, Presses Universitaires du
Septentrion, Villeneuve d'Ascq, 289 pp.