

The Parliamentary Detour:

Agenda 21 in a presidential and parliamentary context

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Abstract

In the debate between adversaries of either presidential or parliamentary democracies, many possible theories are given to explain the relative shorter lifespan of presidential democracies. Two of those variables, the ‘veto-player composition’ by George Tsebelis and the ‘chain of delegation’ by Kaare Strøm, are used in this thesis for an in-depth case study of the perils and virtues of either systems in the field of (sustainable) policymaking. The United States and Netherlands are compared in their implementation of the United Nations sustainability action-plan *Agenda 21*. The results yield the observation that the presidential system (United States) had to take a ‘parliamentary detour’ to facilitate policy congruence and an adequate implementation.

1 – Introduction

In our modern conception of democracy, the idea of the representative democracy has almost become synonymous with the word ‘democracy’. This understandably so, seeing that direct democratic practices do not lend themselves to modern population sizes. Therefore, the need for these democracies seems to be generally understood. Their embodiment, on the other hand, is not. The world is home to a vast array of different representative democracies. Contrary to what this collective name suggests, however, they are not easily generalized. Because no two countries’ constitutions and political institutions are the same, it can prove to be challenging to find common denominators between these political regimes.

The distinction between ‘presidential democracies’ and ‘parliamentary democracies’ illustrates this problem. This generalization refers to the shape of a country’s political institutions and how they are organized to form a government. While this generalization might be perceived as being somewhat broad and imprecise, it has led to a fierce and well-developed academic debate between proponents and adversaries of both democratic systems. Known as the ‘*presidentialism versus parliamentarism-debate*’ (henceforth PvsP), this academic dispute is fueled by the observation that parliamentary democracies have a higher survival rate than their presidential counterparts.¹ This difference sparked the interest of many academics and inspired a quest to find out why this discrepancy exists. The focus hereby lies with determining the institutional variables that contribute to the successes and failures of these two regime types.²

Key variables in the debate are usually tested on a large data set or are presented as political models. While this is useful in its own right, it is also important to assess the actual applicability (i.e. validity) of these variables via an in-depth analysis. Therefore, this thesis will apply two variables from the PvsP-debate to two case-studies, and perform a case-comparison between the two. The chosen variables concern the possibility for creating durable policies, also known as ‘political efficacy’. The first selected variable is the ‘veto-player composition’, which entails the idea that political stability and policy durability are dependent on the amount of political players

¹ Kent Eaton, ‘Parliamentarism versus presidentialism in the policy arena’, *Comparative Politics* 32 (2000) 3, 355-376, there 355.

² Robert Elgie, ‘From Linz to Tsebelis: three waves of presidential/parliamentary studies?’, *Democratization* 12 (2005) 1, 106 – 122, there 106 – 110.

who can alter the status quo.³ The other variable is the ‘chain of delegation’, which argues that political efficacy increases when the path of political delegation gets more direct.⁴ Because these variables are an integral part of this research and the PvsP-debate, a closer examination will be provided in the second chapter.

Finding a topic on which two governments chose to implement policy at the same time can be a difficult task. To overcome this problem, this thesis will analyze *Agenda 21*, which is the 1993 sustainability action-plan which spawned from the UNCED.⁵ Because *Agenda 21* is a product of a United Nations’ summit, it could be argued that it provided imperative for policy change within its member states. This means that the countries which responded to the recommendations of this action-plan had to implement similar policies. Because of this, the input (i.e. incentive) for these countries is the roughly the same, meaning that analysis of this policymaking process can focus solely on the process of policy-creation and its output.

An action-plan targeting sustainable development is chosen because both in socio-cultural and political life, sustainability and sustainable development have become an increasingly important factors of everyday life. People are gaining an increased understanding of the concept and subsequently make more sustainable lifestyle choices. On a political level, this realization has also been acknowledged and climate change and durable resource management have been subject of the political agenda for many years now. On an academic level, there are many publications on the (possible) impact of human activity on the ecosystem. Educational institutions increasingly incorporate sustainable themes into their curriculum.⁶ Governments, enterprises and privates increasingly fund and invest in technological innovations which foster sustainability. Because sustainability is becoming increasingly important around the globe, it is important to understand its political history, which ultimately might predict its political trajectory.

While the UN has released more recent action-plans and goals concerning sustainable development, *Agenda 21* has been specifically chosen to be the topic of analysis. This is because it was the product of the first international summit on sustainable development and therefore

³ George Tsebelis, ‘Decision making in political systems: veto players in presidentialism, parliamentarism, multicameralism and multipartyism’, *British Journal of Political Science* 25 (1995) 3, 289 – 325.

⁴ Kaare Strøm, ‘Delegation and accountability in parliamentary democracies’, *European journal of political research* 37 (2000) 3, 261-290.

⁵ UNCED = United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, colloquially known as the Rio Earth Summit.

⁶ Jacqueline Cramer, *De groene golf: geschiedenis en toekomst van de milieubeweging* (Utrecht 1989) 135 – 136.

provides a good starting point for the analysis of sustainability in political spheres. Admittedly, *Our Common Future* was released by the Brundtland-commission four years prior to this summit. However, this report, which can be credited with conceptualizing sustainable development in its current form, leans more towards *what* should change rather than *how* it should change. *Our Common Future* introduced the concept of sustainable development to the UN member states. UNCED then took this concept and created a globally applicable action-plan in consultation with the member states. Therefore, *Agenda 21* might be dubbed as the first international plan for sustainable policymaking. Naturally, *Agenda 21* has not been exempt from criticism. Assessing its conception and shortcomings is essential for understanding the process of sustainable policymaking. Regarding its importance for this analysis, *Agenda 21* will be further elaborated upon in chapter 3.

The implementation of the policy recommendations made in *Agenda 21* will be examined for two governments. The selected cases are the United States and the Netherlands, which have been selected for several reasons. The first of which is their differences in regime-type. Both these countries purport to be representative democracies, but they differ in their institutional construction of this idea. The United States is known for being a presidential democracy, while the Netherlands has a parliamentary democracy. The (relative) political stability and longevity of these democracies makes them arguably well-established examples of both types of democracies.

Additionally, the cases fit the research because both countries have been members of the United Nations ever since it was founded. This means that from 1945 onwards, the UN have played a significant role in their international and national politics. Membership of the UN has been an integral part of these countries' politics for more than sixty years, indicating both countries share a sense of commitment to UN developments.

These countries can also be referred to as being 'Western democracies', indicating that they are developed and modernized countries leading in economic growth and innovation. This is important, because countries which are still developing or are less technically or economically capable might encounter more obstacles in implementing or accepting certain sustainable policies. Arguably, both these countries have similar capabilities and possibilities to interpret and execute *Agenda 21* and seem unhindered in their policies by external factors such as poverty, backwardness or large-scale corruption.

Because these countries are relatively similar in these regards, they offer a clean slate upon which this research can be drawn and therefore lend themselves for an in-depth analysis of their policymaking process using the variables from the PvsP-debate.

In response to the release of *Agenda 21*, the United States created a special council called The President's Council on Sustainable Development (PCSD) to guide its implementation. In the Netherlands, on the other hand, the implementation was channeled through the regular process of policymaking. This observation, together with the PvsP-debate, has led to the following research questions:

Why did the United States, with its presidential democracy, find it necessary to create a separate council to implement Agenda 21, while the Netherlands, with its parliamentary system, built on its existing institutional arrangements to do so? Can this be explained through their institutional differences?

The assessment of the implementation of *Agenda 21* will be done through examination of policy documents of both these countries. For the United States, these will be the documents created by the PCSD. For the Netherlands, this will be the Second National Environmental Policy Plan (henceforth NEPP2). These documents are selected because they can be seen as these countries' direct answers to the release of *Agenda 21*, and showcase the way in which its policy recommendations have been given shape by their respective governments. The fourth and fifth chapter will examine these documents in relation to *Agenda 21*. In the sixth chapter, the differences and similarities between the two cases will be highlighted and explained through the two PvsP-variables, with regard for these countries' socio-cultural and political backgrounds. The analyzed period ranges from 1987 – 1998 (with exception of historiographical contexts), accounting for the years leading up to *Agenda 21* until the last policy publication.

This research analyses the process of sustainable policymaking through questions of political efficacy via a comparative-historical approach. This approach has been chosen because it bridges the gap between ideographic (via the in-depth analysis of both cases) and nomothetic (the testing of the PvsP-variables) explanations.⁷ Therefore, this research will assess the general

⁷ Robert A. Dahl, *On Democracy [Second Edition]* (New Haven 2008), 1 – 19.

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Nomothetic explanations tend to generalize (try to find lawful connections), and are often used in the social sciences. Ideographic explanations, on the other hand, are more bound to the specifics (recognize the unique aspects). They are often used in the humanities.

applicability of these variables without sacrificing the specific characteristics of the cases. As will be shown in the analytic chapter, examining these cases through a comparative-historical looking glass yields results which would not be obtained by using either a strictly historical or social-scientific approach.

After the aforementioned introduction to the PvsP-debate and the chosen variables, and a brief historicization of sustainable development and *Agenda 21*, both cases will be analyzed. This analysis will consist of a concise summary of the countries' social and political context together with its history with sustainable development. This is necessary to account for the ideographic nature of these cases as well as to chart possible external influences on the process of sustainable policymaking. Hereafter, the aforementioned governmental policy documents will be examined through four points. These are 1) the problem definition, 2) the participants, 3) the recipients and 4) the outcome for this problem, accompanied by a concise examination of this outcome. This systematic analysis presents the more nomothetic side of the research, and is necessary to distill the needed information to feed into the variables. The found problem definitions can be compared to the outcomes, thereby showcasing the results of the policy-cycle. The participants in and the recipients of these policy plans are needed to identify the veto-players and delegates of the policymaking process. Ultimately, the policy cycle (1 and 4) will be analyzed through feeding (2) and (3) into the PvsP-variables and their underlying theories.

In structuring the research like this, it will be able to assess the applicability and validity of these variables through the examination of the far-reaching grip of sustainable development. In doing so, the research will show that the veto-player composition and chains of delegation explain that it was necessary for the United States to create this council in order to reach policy congruence and achieve a proper implementation of the recommendations found in *Agenda 21*.

2 - Presidentialism versus Parliamentarism

Since its conception in the 1990's, the PvsP-debate has taken different trajectories and remains inconclusive to this day. Throughout the years, the differences between these two regime-types (presidential and parliamentary democracies) have been studied through different approaches. Robert Elgie argues that these approaches can be categorized in three 'waves'.⁸ Elgie found that with each new wave the debate got more nuanced and encompassing. This chapter will give a brief overview of these waves and their contributors. Although the debate was initially aimed at finding nomothetic explanations, the historiographical overview in this chapter will provide the necessary information needed to understand why a bottom-up approach (i.e. ideographic) is used in this thesis. Furthermore, it will explain why specifically these two variables have been selected to assess the sustainable policymaking process.

2.1 – *The three waves of the debate*

2.1.1 – The First Wave

According to Elgie, the first wave started with the debate between Juan J. Linz and Donald J. Horowitz in the *Journal of Democracy*.⁹ In this wave, the regime type (presidential or parliamentary) was the only explanatory variable, and the success of democratic consolidation was the only dependent variable.¹⁰ It should be stressed that, although there were different voices during this first wave, there was a general preference towards parliamentary democracies due to their higher survival rate.¹¹

In their debate, Linz argued that parliamentary democracies are more resilient due to their broad representative nature (coalitions formed from multipartyism), their possibility for a strong opposition during a cabinet's reign, and often experienced and well established political players. Presidential systems, on the other hand, have to rely on the virtues of the president for an administration to be fruitful, because the often accompanying winner-takes-all voting system can

⁸ Robert Elgie is a professor at the department of Law and Government at the Dublin City University. He specializes in semi-presidential democracies and the implications thereof.

⁹ Elgie, 'From Linz to Tsebelis', 106.

¹⁰ Elgie, 'From Linz to Tsebelis', 106 - 107.

¹¹ *Ibidem*, 108.

alienate the opposition.¹² Horowitz, who argued in favor of a presidential system, provided several counterexamples to Linz's claims, showing that power abuse and lacking representativeness are also possible and probable in parliamentary democracies. He also showed that presidentialism could actually thrive in deeply divided countries such as Nigeria and Sri Lanka. Horowitz found that this showed that Linz's argument was more concerned with the plurality voting system than the institutional make-up of a presidential government itself.¹³ At the end of their polemic, Linz ultimately questioned which mixture of political institutions, legislation, and socio-cultural interests creates the most efficacious democratic system.¹⁴ This question can be regarded as the dominating question which shaped the rest of the debate.

2.1.2 – The Second Wave

The second wave, which started around 1993, added more explanatory variables to the debate. These include the roles of the party system (i.e. amount of parties) and leadership powers. The dependent variable of 'good governance' was also added.¹⁵ Essentially, these authors differed themselves from their predecessors by looking at separate political institutions rather than denouncing the regime type as a whole.

Some main contributors to this wave were Matthew Shugart, John Carey, and Scott Mainwaring.¹⁶ The latter of which found that presidential democracies indeed were generally more unstable than presidential ones, but that this effect was correlated to presidential regimes which had a two-party system. Here, the explanatory variable became the amount of parties instead of the regime type.¹⁷ Shugart and Carey addressed additional variables such as effective presidential power, the rigidity of a presidential administration (i.e. the presidential term), and the democratic legitimacies involved (e.g. the separation of powers).¹⁸ Arend Lijphart can also be seen

¹² Juan J. Linz, 'The perils of presidentialism', *Journal of Democracy* 1(1990) 1, 51 – 69,

¹³ Donald R. Horowitz, 'Comparing democratic systems', *Journal of Democracy* 1 (1990) 4, 73 – 79.

¹⁴ Juan J. Linz, 'The virtues of parliamentarism', *Journal of Democracy* 1(1990) 4, 84-91.

¹⁵ Good governance concerns the way in which political institutions handle public affairs and manage publicly available resources.

¹⁶ Elgie, 'From Linz to Tsebelis', 106 - 107.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, 111.

¹⁸ Matthew S. Shugart and John M. Carey, *Presidents and assemblies: constitutional design and electoral dynamics* (Cambridge 1992) 28 – 43.

as a contributor to this second wave, because he distinguished between consensual and majoritarian democracies (instead of parliamentary and presidential democracies respectively).¹⁹

2.1.3 – The Third Wave

The third wave differs itself from the preceding two in the fact that it is rooted in more broad theories of political science. The differences between the regimes are not the primary focus of the debate anymore, but they add to the debate through inductive reasoning.²⁰ This means that a specific methodological approach is taken in examining a specific variable rather than using multiple explanatory variables.²¹ Different regimes are then used as case studies, creating a bottom-up structure as opposed to the top-to-bottom structure of the previous two waves. This means that the regime type became the dependent variable instead of the other way around.

One of the most important contributors to this approach was George Tsebelis, who argued for the variable of ‘veto-player composition’.²² Essentially, this means that the agreement of a certain veto-player (or players) in a political system is necessary to change the status quo.²³ Here, Tsebelis uses his idea of veto-players to identify parliamentary and presidential regimes rather than the other way around. Another influential account in this third wave is the work of Kaare Strøm.²⁴ He specifically targeted the structure of political delegation and accountability, and how it affected decisional efficiency and political incentives (i.e. creation of policy).²⁵

Other research suggests that looking at the time and place in which a constitution was drafted is more determining of its contents than the label ‘presidential’ or ‘parliamentary’. Therefore, even the whole idea behind the PvsP-categorization is contested. It is suggested that alternative conceptions of executive-legislative relations such as Lijphart’s consensual-majoritarian distinction or Tsebelis’ veto-players might be a better fit.²⁶ This observation speaks

¹⁹ Elgie, ‘From Linz to Tsebelis’, 112 – 115.

& Arend Lijphart, *Patterns of democracy: government forms and performance in thirty-six countries [second edition]* (United States, 2012) 1 – 294.

²⁰ Elgie, ‘From Linz to Tsebelis’, 112 – 115.

²¹ Ibidem, 115.

²² George Tsebelis is a political scientist and professor at the University of Michigan. He specializes in political systems and the modeling of these systems.

²³ George Tsebelis, ‘Decision making in political systems’, 301.

²⁴ Strøm is a political scientist working at UC San Diego. His interests include coalition theory and the institutions of parliamentary democracy.

²⁵ Strøm, ‘Delegation and accountability in parliamentary democracies’, 261.

²⁶ Jose Antonio Cheibub, Zachary Elkins, and Tom Ginsburg, ‘Beyond presidentialism and parliamentarism’, *British Journal of Political Science* 44 (2014) 3, 515-544, there 539 – 540.

in favor of inductive reasoning, which is therefore used in this thesis to evaluate the quality of the policymaking process.

2.2 – Two variables to assess policymaking

Tsebelis' and Strøm's third-wave theories will be used as a theoretical framework for this thesis. They have been selected for two reasons. The first of which is the fact that these theories are still relevant to this day. The works of both authors are cited quite often in contemporary accounts on the PvsP-debate. Secondly, both works concern the process of policymaking in the context of the PvsP-debate. Since the analysis of the cases will look into the process of sustainable policymaking in both the Netherlands and the United States, these variables will be useful in examining these cases. This sub-chapter will elaborate on the theory behind these variables.

2.2.1 – Veto-player composition

According to Tsebelis, comparisons in the PvsP-debate are often made between regimes which share characteristics. This is problematic, because a selection like this makes it harder to expand such comparisons with additional regimes.²⁷ Every political system has its own configuration of veto-players, which affects the possibilities for policymaking. Arguably, then, this influences political stability as well.²⁸ The veto-player composition can therefore serve to assess different political regimes. Tsebelis differentiates between institutional veto-players (upper and lower chamber legislators) and partisan veto-players (coalition government majority).²⁹ Influential interest groups can also be categorized as veto-players (firms, labor groups, and army).³⁰ Presidential and parliamentary regimes usually differ in veto-player types and composition, making them identifiable through this variable.

For parliamentary systems, the amount of veto-players is usually dependent on the amount of parties in the ruling coalition. This can also be one, if there is a majority government.³¹ For presidential governments, it is highly dependent on the rights of the president and his/her relation to the legislative branch. The United States usually has three veto-players (President, House of

²⁷ Tsebelis, 'Decision making in political systems', 291.

²⁸ Ibidem, 289.

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Policy stability relates to the idea that policies do not change radically when a new government is formed, and that no violence or other uproar is created in the implementation of a policy.

²⁹ Tsebelis, 'Decision making in political systems', 301.

³⁰ Ibidem, 306 – 307.

³¹ Ibidem, 306.

Representatives, Senate). However, when the two chambers of Congress are congruent they can be seen one veto-player.³² Additionally, the amount of veto-players can differ per issue. Depending on the proposition, certain institutional and partisan veto-players might react. The same goes for interest groups, which only assert their dominance when their interests are at stake.³³

This means that the policy output of different regimes can actually be the same, depending on the amount of veto-players and the policy proposition. Ultimately, Tsebelis concluded that the policy stability increases when the number of veto-players increases, their ideological congruence decreases, but political cohesion increases (willingness to cooperate). Thus, more veto-players lead to more discussion and less swiftness in policymaking, but ultimately provide more durable policies.³⁴ However, a political regime also becomes more unstable if multiple veto-players with strong ideologies are present (and have no congruence between them).³⁵ High policy stability is therefore predicted to also be related to higher government instability.³⁶

In this research, the policy propositions themselves are practically the same in both cases. This will provide a good comparison between the veto-player compositions in either political regime, and should be able to (partly) explain the differences in policy-outcome of both cases.

³² Ibidem, 309 – 310.

³³ Ibidem, 305 – 308.

³⁴ Ibidem, 322.

³⁵ Ibidem, 321.

³⁶ Ibidem, 322.

2.2.2 – Delegation and accountability

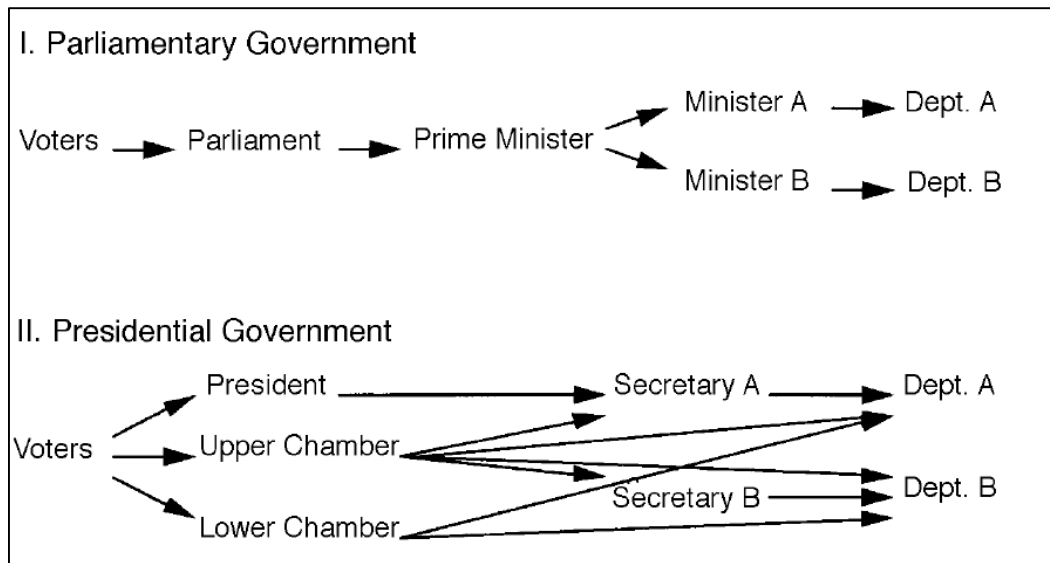
Strøm has two problems with the preceding two waves of the PvsP-debate. The first of which is the issue that constitutional design differs greatly per regime. This makes categorization in either regime-type seemingly ambiguous. Secondly, it is usually not clear how the normative variables by which these regimes have been evaluated are related to one another. Therefore, Strøm suggests an alternative approach to outline the way in which parliamentary democracies are expected to differ from presidential democracies.³⁷

This alternative is the assessment of delegation and accountability within a regime. Delegation occurs due to time constraints and/or a lack of specific skills to perform a task. According to Strøm, the chain of delegation in representative democracies is as follows: 1) from voter to elected representative, 2) from legislators to the executive branch, 3) from the prime minister/president to the heads of executive departments, and 4) from these departments to civil servants. Consequently, the chain of accountability in these regimes is the delegation chain in reverse. Accountability only works if there is an obligation to act on behalf of the task-giver, and a punishment is in place if the delegate fails to do so.³⁸

Using this chain as a blueprint, a proper definition of parliamentary democracies can be made: it consists of a single chain of delegation with multiple links. In this chain, each link delegates to one or more non-competing agents. The heads of these agencies are subsequently accountable for their ministries/departments and the completion of the delegated tasks. The figure below illustrates this chain:

³⁷ Strøm, 'Delegation and accountability in parliamentary democracies', 261 – 262.

³⁸ *Ibidem*, 266 – 267.



Strøm's chains of delegation for both regimes.³⁹

This figure also shows the presidential chain, which is far less direct than the parliamentary one. The presidential chain branches out to different secretaries, making the task of delegating more convoluted. This also makes the chain for accountability (the chain in reverse) harder to pinpoint.⁴⁰

To ensure proper accountability, regimes employ checks such as contracts, screening, and report requirements to check whether or not the delegated job is done correctly. In parliamentary systems this accountability is usually ensured *ex ante* (i.e. before appointing these delegates). In presidential system, this accountability is usually *ex post* delegation (i.e. afterwards through assessment).⁴¹ Ultimately, Strøm argues that this smaller parliamentary chain leads to advantages, of which the most notable are decisional efficiency and a stimulation of political incentives.⁴²

³⁹ Direct excerpt from: Strøm, 'Delegation and accountability in parliamentary democracies', 269.

⁴⁰ Strøm, 'Delegation and accountability in parliamentary democracies', 268 – 270.

⁴¹ Ibidem, 272 – 275.

⁴² Ibidem, 285 – 286.

2.3 – Concluding remarks

The past twenty years of the PvsP-debate have shown that institutional variables matter in assessing the success of a democracy. However, in order to say anything useful about the consequences of either system, the institutional context in which they operate is also needed.⁴³ It can be said that there is still a consensus on the merits of parliamentarism throughout the contributions to this debate. Presidentialism often seems to go hand in hand with variables which inhibit successful democratic consolidation and good governance. In analyzing the reports of the American PCSD and the Dutch NEPP2, the following chapters will assess whether or not democratic consolidation is indeed more challenging for the presidential case than for the parliamentary case through the variables mentioned above.

⁴³ Elgie, 'From Linz to Tsebelis, 118 – 119.

3 – The UN Sustainability Agenda of 1993: Agenda 21

In this research, the implementation of *Agenda 21* is used as a case study to test the applicability of two variables from the PvsP-debate. *Agenda 21* is not the first nor the last United Nations document about sustainable development. However, it has been selected as the case-study because of two reasons. The first of which is its imperative for UN members to create sustainable development policies, which include the US and the Netherlands. Because of the recommendations of *Agenda 21*, both countries adopted similar policies at roughly the same time, making it a viable testing ground for the selected variables. Furthermore, because it was the first time such an action-plan was released, interference of preceding sustainable policymaking is reduced as much as possible.

The other reason for choosing *Agenda 21* is its historical significance. *Agenda 21* is the product of the most important environmental summit ever held (UNCED), which aimed to transform the message of the Brundtland-commission into universally applicable policy recommendations.⁴⁴ Even to this day, almost thirty years later, its influence is still visible in the United Nations (e.g. 2015 Sustainable Development Goals) as well as in national sustainable development policies. It essentially laid the groundwork for sustainable policymaking and forms the foundation of renewed incentives surrounding sustainable development.

To explain why the idea of ‘sustainable development’ gained enough weight to warrant the creation of a transnational action-plan, this chapter features a historiographical overview as well as critical reading of the concept of sustainable development and the conception of *Agenda 21*. In order to assess the way in which the Dutch NEPP2 and the United States’ PCSD have implemented this action-plan, the recommendations and main themes of *Agenda 21* will be examined. These policy plans are seen as the direct answers to *Agenda 21*, and comparing their contents to *Agenda 21* is significant in understanding the differences between policy-translation in either regime-type.

⁴⁴ Jeremy J. Caradonna, *Sustainability: a history* (New York, 2014) 154 – 155.

3.1 – The road to Agenda 21

It is hard to pinpoint where and when sustainable ideals originated. However, one of the most important scientific starting points of sustainable development was the ‘Biospheric Conference’⁴⁵ held in Paris in 1968. This initiative spawned from the observation that the idea of nature conservation divided industrialized and developed countries. The conference called for an internationally coordinated program for researching global environmental problems and the rational use of natural resources.⁴⁶ Developing countries feared that their interests (i.e. being able to industrialize) would be jeopardized because of new environmental regulations. In 1971, a preparatory commission for the Stockholm Conference (assembled in Founex, Switzerland) consoled their concerns by assuring that environmental protection policies would not interfere with their economic development.⁴⁷ These two events might be seen as the starting point for the conceptualization of sustainable development in economic terms.

These developments, together with diplomats from countries’ affected by environmental and ecological change turning to the UN for help, led to a decisive moment in the history of sustainable development: the UN 1972 Conference on the Human Environment (Stockholm Conference). This conference established the UNEP⁴⁸ and produced the *Stockholm Declaration*.⁴⁹ Although the term ‘sustainable development’ was not yet used in here, it can be regarded as a watershed in UN environmental law.⁵⁰ A total of 26 principles formed this declaration, which aim to protect natural resources, reduce pollution, nurse financial markets and improve the overall human condition.⁵¹ Ten years later, however, it became apparent that nations were actually doing worse in most areas than before the declaration.⁵²

⁴⁵ Officially called the ‘Intergovernmental Conference of Experts on a Scientific Basis for Rational Use and Conservation of the Biosphere’.

⁴⁶ William. A. Adams, *Green development: environment and sustainability in a developing world* (New York, 2009) 53 – 54.

⁴⁷ Adams, *Green development*, 60 – 61.

⁴⁸ United Nations Environmental Program.

⁴⁹ Caradonna, *Sustainability*, 139 - 140.

⁵⁰ Lynton Keith Caldwell, *International Environmental Policy: From the Twentieth to the Twenty-First Century* (London 1996) 63 – 78.

⁵¹ United Nations, *Report of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment*, (Online publication by the United Nations, Stockholm 1972), 8 – 15.

⁵² Rebecca A. Hoelting, ‘After Rio: The sustainable development concept following the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development’ *Georgia Journal for International and Comparative Law* 24 (1994), 117 – 136, there 122 – 124.

& Caldwell, ‘International Environmental Policy, 101 – 102.

In the second half of the twentieth century, the world was divided due to the Cold War. The role of the ‘powerful, industrialized’ West was ascertained in its competition with the Soviet Union. Economic and military power were key factors in this ‘war’; sustainability almost became a swear word in political terms.⁵³ So much so in fact, that Ronald Reagan symbolically removed the solar panels of the roof of the White House.⁵⁴ These geopolitical tensions might have been the driving force for the United Nations to rebrand sustainability to ‘sustainable development’, which made the possibility for continued economic growth an integral part of the equation.⁵⁵ Furthermore, the UN gave a mandate for officially using this term in the academic field.

The result of this mandate was the IUCN’s⁵⁶ *World Conservation Strategy* published in 1980.⁵⁷ It addressed the impact of human activity and subsequently introduced sustainable development as the answer. This facilitated a shift from conservatism to constructive optimism. The interconnectedness of human well-being, economic growth, and the environment became increasingly appreciated. This report in term led to an increase in the UN’s significance as a proprietor of sustainable development. The UN acknowledged the global concerns following from human activity, and subsequently established the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) in 1983.⁵⁸

WCED was founded to explore the meaning of environmental concerns and their linkage to the social and economic fabric of the (modern) world.⁵⁹ This commission, colloquially known as the ‘Brundtland-commission’ (after chairwoman Gro Harlem Brundtland), published a highly influential report in which the findings of the commission were presented and explained. *Our Common Future*, as the report was called, shifted the pace of environmental debates in a higher gear and laid the conceptual framework for sustainable policymaking in the 1990’s.⁶⁰ *Our Common Future* presented a lack of sustainability as an economic bottleneck. In order to ensure the growth and prosperity humans had grown accustomed to, sustainable measures had to be

⁵³ Caradonna, *Sustainability*, 139 - 140.

⁵⁴ *Ibidem*, 139.

⁵⁵ *Ibidem*, 137.

⁵⁶ International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources.

⁵⁷ Caradonna, *Sustainability*, 141 - 142.

⁵⁸ *Ibidem*.

⁵⁹ Iris Borowy, *Defining sustainable development for our common future: a history of the World Commission on Environment and Development (Brundtland Commission)* (New York 2014) 56.

⁶⁰ Maarten A. Hajer, *The politics of environmental discourse: ecological modernization and the policy process* (Oxford 1995) 8 – 9.

taken.⁶¹ The efforts of the Brundtland-commission made their definition for sustainable development widely understood. This definition was:

*“Meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability for future generations to meet their own needs”*⁶²

The definition cleared the way for sustainable development to be used outside the borders of the UN and made it applicable for governments, NGO’s and private institutions.⁶³ Therefore, the Brundtland-commission should be credited for conceptualizing the idea of sustainable development in the economic terms which still shape the debate today.⁶⁴ As Bill Adams put it: *“Sustainable development was about tuning the economic machine, not redesigning it”*⁶⁵ However, this ‘tuning’ is actually one of the main criticisms of the ‘sustainable development’-movement.

For example, the term itself is contested because some academics find it to be an oxymoron: the Brundtland-definition led the term ‘development’ to become synonymous with growth instead of challenging the existing structures⁶⁶. Additionally, some argued that ‘sustaining’ something does not equal ‘growth’, but rather entails the conservation of an existing situation.⁶⁷ Some even saw ‘sustainable development’ as an attempt to whitewash existing wrongdoings.⁶⁸ The message of *Our Common Future* itself was also seen as being contradictory, because it denounces the ramifications of economic growth, only to later encourage renewed economic growth.⁶⁹

These criticisms notwithstanding, the UN followed *Our Common Future* and started preparing a summit which would bring together its members to talk about the progress of sustainable development. This led to the largest climate convention ever: the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro (UNCED) in June of 1992. The aim of this convention was to address and explore

⁶¹ Adams, *Green development*, 90.

⁶² Hoelting, ‘After Rio’, 124.

⁶³ Ibidem, 124 – 125.

⁶⁴ Caradonna, *Sustainability*, 144.

⁶⁵ Adams, *Green development*, 94.

⁶⁶ John Robinson, ‘Squaring the circle? Some thoughts on the idea of sustainable development’, *Ecological Economics* 48 (2004) 4, 369 – 384, there 375 – 376.

⁶⁷ Caradonna, *Sustainability*, 142 – 153.

⁶⁸ Stephen J. Macekura, *Of Limits and Growth: The rise of global sustainable development in the twentieth century* (New York, 2015) 264.

&

Robinson, ‘Squaring the Circle’, 374 – 375.

⁶⁹ Caradonna, *Sustainability*, 142 – 153.

sustainable topics such as renewable energy, production patterns, and vehicular emission rates. While most of these topics were readily addressed by the Brundtland-commission, they had not yet been discussed by UN members. The findings of the summit were published in an advisory action-plan called *Agenda 21*.

The Earth Summit, however, did have its problems. The summit was dominated by 72 principles, set-up by a preparation commission, which were not open for discussion. In spite of this preparation (or perhaps because of it), it proved to be hard to reach a consensus. Furthermore, many NGO's expressed discontent with their lack of influence on UNCED. Although the preparation commission tried to include them in the process of constructing the summit, NGO's were ultimately excluded from the official negotiations. Only the world's largest NGO's were able to exert influence through lobbying. Ultimately, *Agenda 21* mentions NGO's as an integral part in achieving sustainable development, but their actual role remains unspecified.⁷⁰

The Earth Summit was advocated as being decisive in the fate of the earth. However, this fate was not easily sealed. Negotiations were plagued by conflicts of interest between industrialized and non-industrialized members. The latter of which were afraid their development would be hindered by restrictive measures such as emission caps.⁷¹ Moreover, these countries were concerned that the new economic order as presented in the *World Conservation Strategy* did not sufficiently address the existing problems within their countries.⁷² Another controversial issue the Rio conference spoke about was 'additionality'. Additionality entails transferring resources from developed to developing countries to fund environmental programs. While being an integral (mandatorily discussed) part of the summit, most industrialized nations rejected increases in additionality.⁷³ Finally, The United States' participation was also lacking. George H.W. Bush was reluctant to participate in several sensitive areas because the summit fell in the election year of the United States.⁷⁴ Ultimately, the United States' role during the Rio Earth Summit is often characterized as being obstructing and unfriendly towards environmental policies.⁷⁵

All these problems led to negotiations which were not necessarily as effective and fruitful as they could have been, and created what some might call a watered down list of principles, known

⁷⁰ Adams, *Green development*, 86 – 89.

⁷¹ Ibidem.

⁷² Macekura, *Of Limits and Growth*, 277.

⁷³ Ibidem, 263.

⁷⁴ Adams, *Green development*, 87.

⁷⁵ Macekura, *Of Limits and Growth*, 272.

as the *Rio Declaration*, complemented by a large document of good intentions (*Agenda 21*)⁷⁶ *Agenda 21* claims that it reflects a global consensus and commitment to cooperation on sustainable development. While it describes many essential actions to establish sustainability, none of these actions are made mandatory.⁷⁷ This voluntary, non-binding nature of *Agenda 21* is one of the main critiques of the document.⁷⁸

Despite all its flaws, it should be recognized that *Agenda 21*'s intentions were benign, and its scope was enormous.⁷⁹ Its 600-page size is a testament to the hardship endured to consider all relevant arguments at one summit.⁸⁰ Furthermore, the *Rio Declaration* turned sustainable development into a human right.⁸¹ While not the ideal outcome of a summit on such an important subject, it might have been the best possible outcome given the stakes and problems involved. Additionally, it proved to be more influential than the following Johannesburg Conference (WSSD) held ten years later, which was held in the aftermath of the September 11th-attacks which diverted global attention away from sustainable development.⁸²

Agenda 21 is built on the aforementioned 'Brundtland-definition' of sustainable development. However, it adds that:

*International cooperation in this area should be designed to complement and support - not to diminish or subsume - sound domestic economic policies, in both developed and developing countries, if global progress towards sustainable development is to be achieved.*⁸³

Agenda 21 calls upon all nations to create a global partnership for sustainable development. It "addresses the pressing problems of today and also aims at preparing the world for challenges of the next century".⁸⁴ The underlying goal of the document is to unify economic development with the preservation of the environment.⁸⁵ Governments and their national strategies play the defining

⁷⁶ Adams, *Green Development*, 90.

⁷⁷ *Ibidem*, 88 – 90.

⁷⁸ Caradonna, *Sustainability*, 156.

⁷⁹ Adams, *Green Development*, 93 – 97.

⁸⁰ *Ibidem*, 90.

⁸¹ Caradonna, *Sustainability*, 155.

⁸² Anne E. Egelston, *Sustainable Development: a history* (Dordrecht, 2013) 18.

⁸³ United Nations Conference on Environment & Development (henceforth UNCED), *Agenda 21* (Online Publication by the United Nations, Rio de Janeiro 1992), there 4.

⁸⁴ Hoelting, 'After Rio', 128.

⁸⁵ *Ibidem*.

role in its implementation, supplemented by international cooperation. It is a flexible action-plan that describes objectives and calls to action, but remains malleable enough to fit the specific context of every participating country.⁸⁶

3.2 – The contents of Agenda 21

Agenda 21 is a large 600 page document divided into four sections with 40 chapters between them, all of which contain recommendations for sustainable policymaking. The sections respectively tackle social and economic dimensions, resource conservation and development, strengthening the role of major groups, and the (financial) means to implement all these recommendations. The chapters within these sections delve into different sub-categories of these topics.⁸⁷ The general themes of these sections are made visible in the following tables, which present the main objectives and focal points (or instruments) that should be incorporated in order to reach these objectives. The fourth section is not summarized, because it essentially is a summarization of the focal points and instruments:

⁸⁶ UNCED, *Agenda 21*, 3.

⁸⁷ *Ibidem*, 1 – 2.

Section I: Social and Economic Dimensions⁸⁸

Main Objectives:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Ensuring an open and equitable trading system;- Improving market-access to developing countries;- Improving, optimizing, and synchronizing sustainable policies on the commodity markets;- Devising policies which unite economic growth and environmental protection;- Reduction of wasteful production and consumption;- The establishment of a healthy and sustainable population.<ul style="list-style-type: none">o Eradication of poverty and/or overconsumption
Focal Points and Instruments:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Resource dependency of different communities;<ul style="list-style-type: none">o Decentralization of resource controlo Ensured income-generation for poverty-stricken areaso Inclusive policies recognizing all stakeholders- Emancipation of minority groups (women, indigenous peoples, and others);- Increase in education about sustainable development;- Proper quantification and examination of data regarding sustainable policies;<ul style="list-style-type: none">o Understanding of demographic dynamicso Charting human disease and other health risks- Legislative measures (e.g. tax exemptions/benefits, forced recycling, packaging regulations);- The creation of an adequate legal and economic framework to promote, aid, and expand sustainable development for people and industries;<ul style="list-style-type: none">o An expansion of specialized human resources trained in sustainable development

⁸⁸ Ibidem, 4 – 75.

*Section II: Resource Conservation and Management*⁸⁹

Main Objectives:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The protection of the global atmosphere; - Adopt resource management systems and frameworks; - Combat deforestation, drought, and desertification; - Make agricultural and rural development ready for population growth; - Protect and conserve ecosystems (flora- and fauna); - Manage marine and fresh water bodies; - Create sustainable human waste management systems.
Focal Points and Instruments:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Take measures complementing readily established treaties; - Quantify and examine pollution levels (air, water, soil) and ozone depletion; - Gather information about the exploitation of resources and the stakeholders involved; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Collaborations with NGO's and other governments for transnational effectiveness - Employ conservation and development techniques for conserving and preserving (useable) landmass; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o A proper valuation of these commodities - Prepare alternative livelihoods and relieve-schemes for poverty-stricken areas; - Regulate agricultural means of production, such as water and energy usage, fertilization, land usage, pest control, and genetic modification; - Support local initiatives surrounding sustainability; - Employ biotechnological inventions; - Maximize recyclability and minimize superfluous waste.

*Section III: Strengthening the Role of Major Groups*⁹⁰

Main Objectives:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identify the largest social groups in a country/region; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Involve these groups in the process of sustainable policymaking o Make their voices heard through councils and focus groups - Abolish discriminating social and judiciary boundaries for minorities; - Coordinate and implement the recommendations of the previous two sections on a small scale; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Exchange information with these local initiatives to better understand the status quo - Strengthen the social fabric of sustainability;
Focal Points and Instruments:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Employ local authorities and initiatives as mediator between the government and these major groups; - Support responsible entrepreneurship and sustainable innovations; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Also reach out to workers and their trade unions - Reach out to the scientific community; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Subsequently employ these new insights in education and training programs.

⁸⁹ Ibidem, 75 – 253.

⁹⁰ Ibidem, 270 – 351.

3.3 - General observations of Agenda 21

In charting these main objectives, focal points, and instruments, it can be observed that *Agenda 21* is indeed rather broad and vague in its recommendations. As mentioned in (3.1), this vagueness primarily derives from the desire to make the action-plan universally applicable for all UN members. However, when the document is read carefully, some general themes can be discerned which form the linking pins between all these topics.

One of these often repeated strategies is the extension of information gathering and analysis. Strengthening the knowledge base is seen as being essential for understanding the status quo and should serve as the basis for policy creation. To achieve this increased comprehension, the need for collaboration between the government and the scientific community (financing and stimulation) is stressed multiple times. A broad regional, national, and transnational knowledge base is needed to create the tailored policies which fit the needs and demands of specific areas and its inhabitants.⁹¹

Sustainable policies require expert knowledge and large time investments; two resources which are not yet readily available. Therefore, in order to implement these crafted measures, an increase in human resources is needed. New human resources can be created through extended education on the several topics addressed in *Agenda 21*.

The need for education, however, reaches further than the mere creation of human resources. Education should also focus on raising awareness about sustainability and the impact of consumerism on the environment throughout the world. This can be achieved through governmental examples, such as the stimulation of sustainable alternatives and tax exempts. A strong sustainable societal fabric forms the backbone of sustainable development. Local sustainable initiatives, for example, are presented as a key mediators between citizens and the national sustainability agenda. Subsequently, governments are asked to support these. In doing so, a sustainable social fabric can be created which forms the foundation (and legitimization) of national sustainable policymaking. These local initiatives should be interwoven with regional and national political institutions to create an encompassing network of knowledge and control.

Following Brundtland, the importance of the inclusion of social groups (especially minorities) is also repeatedly stressed throughout *Agenda 21*. So much so that an entire section is devoted to this topic. Women and indigenous people are specifically mentioned because their

⁹¹ Caradonna, *Sustainability*, 178 - 191.

emancipation (i.e. full inclusion in all parts of society) is seen as a prerequisite for a sustainable community. These social groups are also a primary source for bottom-up information gathering.⁹²

In all of the above, governments are advised to work closely with NGO's that are active in the field of sustainability. This is because these NGO's transcend national boundaries and can therefore be the linking pins between national sustainable development programs. Moreover, governments and NGO's can pool their resources to benefit the network and knowledge base of both parties. Essentially, then, NGO's (especially those related to UNEP)⁹³ are the intermediary between governmental policies and the global sustainability agenda.⁹⁴

In the next two chapters we will see how *Agenda 21* has been received and implemented by both a presidential democracy and a parliamentary democracy. Its release incentivized the creation of (renewed) sustainable policymaking in both the US and the Netherlands, signified by the policy documents that were made in response to its creation.

⁹² Adams, *Green development*, 93.

⁹³ These include IUCN, WWF, and WRI.

⁹⁴ Adams, *Green development*, 90 – 97.

4 – Agenda 21 in the United States

In the United States, sustainability has been (and still is) a heavily debated subject throughout the years. Scientific figures about climate change, the need for emission caps and even the political affiliations of proponents of sustainable policies have all been part of scrutiny and debate. Additionally, a change in the Presidential Administration (and political ideology) can therefore have significant ramifications for certain policies.

The trajectory of sustainable policymaking is a good example of this phenomenon. Where Reagan tore the solar panels of the roof of the White House and Bush Sr. obstructively participated at the Rio Summit, this chapter will show that Bill Clinton's presidency was actually greatly devoted to sustainable policymaking. This indicates that sustainable development can have significant political leverage in the US.

However, the latest Presidential Administration, that of President Trump, even announced their retreat from the *Paris Agreement*. A withdrawal from such an important UN agreement signifies the US' real political power and puts the political weight of the UN in perspective. The argument that a presidential administration can act largely unopposed in its decisions seems to be exemplified by this decision.⁹⁵ These radical changes show a lack in policy stability. On the other side of the same coin, however, is the political efficacy of presidential democracies which seems to be unparalleled by parliamentary democracies.⁹⁶ Although heavily criticized, Donald Trump could (and did) retreat without any real political ramifications for his administration.

This chapter will show, however, that this powerful political efficacy seemingly did not influence the sustainable policymaking process, and that strategizing and implementing the recommendations of *Agenda 21* proved to be a large endeavor with an uncommon structure for the US. The political and societal context in which *Agenda 21* was introduced will be examined historiographically. Additionally, the policy documents that followed the introduction of *Agenda 21* will be systematically examined through four points (see 3.3). The results of both examinations will exemplify a presidential approach to sustainable policymaking. These results will subsequently be used in comparison with the Dutch, parliamentary case.

⁹⁵ Linz, 'The perils of presidentialism', 54 – 55.

⁹⁶ Shugart and Carey, *Presidents and assemblies*, 273 – 275.

4.1 – A growing divide between the government and the electorate

When *Agenda 21* was released, Bill Clinton had recently become President of the United States. Although he was a President from the Democratic Party, Clinton's political ideology can be described as being centrist, which leans towards a balance between social equality and social hierarchy (also known as 'The Third Way'). This can be explained by the repeated failure of the Democrats to win in the two previous elections. This so-called 'third way' sought to find common ground between the two parties to show that these 'New Democrats' did not have to clash with republican ideology.⁹⁷ However, this change in 'political image' led the administration to be unfocused and lacking in political commitment (and, thus, political efficiency).⁹⁸ This was further inhibited by a shift from a Democratic dominated to a Republican dominated Congress in 1995. Additionally, and perhaps because of these problems, Clinton repeatedly stressed the role American citizens had (and the lack of power the government often had) in making the United States a better place. The government was neither the problem, nor the solution. The solution lay with the American people themselves.⁹⁹

In terms of international politics, the United States were in the wake of the Gulf War which spurred new geopolitical tensions in the Middle-East. While the Gulf War ended officially in 1991, tensions remained high as an assassination plot on former president Bush was uncovered and Clinton subsequently ordered a cruise missile strike on the intelligence headquarters in Baghdad. The United States were also present in Somalia, where they led a United Nations peacekeeping mission in the wake of Somalia's Civil War. This presence eventually escalated into a battle between US and local Somalian forces. The US also sent out battleships to ensure the United Nations trade sanctions on the military dictatorship in Haiti. The Cold War further de-escalated by the signing of the Kremlin Accords, which stopped the mutual reprogrammed targeting of nuclear missiles from both countries.

Within the United States, government intervention into daily life was (and still is) often looked upon with a sense of skepticism and suspicion, which is seemingly culturally embedded.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ Colin Campbell and Bert A. Rockman, 'Third Way leadership, old way government: Blair, Clinton and the power to govern', *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 3(2001) 1, 36-48, there 36-37.

⁹⁸ Campbell and Rockman, 'Third way leadership, old way government', 37 – 38 and 46 – 47.

⁹⁹ Kristina M. Tridico, 'Sustainable America in the twenty-first century: a critique of President Clinton's Council on Sustainable Development' *Journal of Natural Resources & Environmental Law* 14 (1998), 205 – 252, there 215 – 219.

¹⁰⁰ Tridico, 'Sustainable America in the twenty-first century', 214.

Political engagement was also low, signified by Clinton's re-election in 1996 which had the lowest voter turn-out in the countries' history.¹⁰¹ This mistrust of the political system is exemplified by a large amount of citizen initiatives spawned often out of a dissatisfaction with government policy on a certain topic (or the lack thereof). Furthermore, political scandals such as the Monica Lewinsky-case further divided the nation.¹⁰² Clinton's approach towards this scandal eventually led to the start of an impeachment-procedure. It was in this context that the political administration had to find a way to unify American society and politics through sustainable development.

4.2 – Humble beginnings: Sustainability in the United States prior to Agenda 21

In the United States, several agencies administer the laws and regulations surrounding the environment, socio-cultural and socio-economic development, and the management of national resources. Some examples include the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Energy, and the Department of Commerce. Agencies such as the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Department of Justice, and the National Oceanic and Atmosphere Administration (NOAA) all concern environmental regulation. These agencies are all under the mandate of the National *Environmental Policy Act* of 1969, which demands agencies to integrate environmental values into their decisions. Although this separation into different departments makes the tasks per agency clearer, it did lead to policy-fragmentation between them.¹⁰³

In 1973, one year after the release of the *Stockholm Declaration*, the United States enacted the *Endangered Species Act*. Although this act does not use the term 'sustainable development', it shares similarities with its concept. The act was enacted in an attempt to find a balance between human development and the preservation of an increasing amount of endangered animal species.¹⁰⁴

In 1991, after the release of *Our Common Future*, the ICLEI was founded. This is an organization of local governments which wish to pursue sustainability and become more resilient. Some of their initiatives include the creation of action-plans, providing a network, establishing

¹⁰¹ Ibidem, 215.

¹⁰² Ibidem, 215 – 224.

¹⁰³ United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), 'Institutional aspects of sustainable development in the United States of America' (Online document by the United Nations, 1997).

¹⁰⁴ Hoelting, 'After Rio', 126.

partnerships, and mediating discussion between local government and federal governmental institutions.¹⁰⁵

The success of the broad definition of ‘sustainable development’ provided in *Our Common Future* gave way to a debate on the implications and ramifications of the term. These small initiatives, together with the *Stockholm Declaration*, *Our Common Future*, and the UN prioritization of sustainable development created enough incentive for a serious implementation of *Agenda 21* in the US, in spite of its criticisms.¹⁰⁶

4.3 - Agenda 21 in the United States: The President’s Council on Sustainable Development

After *Our Common Future* defined ‘sustainable development’ in such a way that it became workable with growing economies, the opportunity arose to implement sustainable development in the domestic political realm.¹⁰⁷ Two months after the release of *Agenda 21*, President Bill Clinton signed *Executive Order 12852* on June 29th, 1993. This order decided that a ‘President’s Council on Sustainable Development’ (PCSD) was to be established as a federal advisory committee.¹⁰⁸ The original objective of the PCSD was to set the agenda on sustainable development.¹⁰⁹ The executive order defines ‘sustainable development’ as:

“ [...] economic growth that will benefit present and future generations without detrimentally affecting the resources or biological systems of the planet.”¹¹⁰

This definition bears resemblance to the Brundtland-definition. It seems to be mostly economic in its scope, although ‘resources’ and ‘biological systems’ are addressed separately. Furthermore, by using the word ‘detrimentally’, the order implies that human impact is inevitable. However, this

¹⁰⁵ ICLEI USA, ‘Who we are’ (no date), <http://icleiusa.org/about-us/who-we-are/>, (11th of May, 2018).

¹⁰⁶ Tridico, ‘Sustainable America in the twenty-first century’, 207 – 209.

¹⁰⁷ Ibidem, 210.

¹⁰⁸ The White House, *President’s Council on Sustainable Development*, (Online Archive by the The White House, Undated). There, ‘Overview’, accessed via <https://clintonwhitehouse2.archives.gov/PCSD/Overview/index.html> (20th April, 2018).

¹⁰⁹ UNDESA, ‘Institutional aspects of sustainable development in the United States of America, ‘*Agenda 21*’.

¹¹⁰ The White House, ‘Executive Order 12852 of June 29, 1993: President’s Council on Sustainable Development’, *Federal Register* 85 (1993) 126.

impact should not be irreversible. While this does not sound ideological in and of itself, it might be perceived as being realistic because it acknowledges the impact of economic growth.

The executive order describes two functions for the PCSD: 1) developing a sustainable action strategy that will contribute to a healthy economy, and 2) gathering expert opinions on national and local sustainable development strategies. The council was designed to execute these functions in two years.¹¹¹ These two functions were to be executed in regard to all the stakeholders which might be affected by these strategies.¹¹² The PCSD issued its final report to the president May of 1999, marking its prolonged six-year lifespan. During its existence, the PCSD had been the primary advisory organ for Clinton on sustainable development, offering 7 reports to the president as well as 7 additional task-force reports on specific topics such as agriculture, population, and infrastructure.¹¹³

The PCSD's six years of existence can be spread out in three phases. The first phase functioned to strategize the implementation of sustainable development (i.e. *Agenda 21*) in the United States. The other two phases oversaw the implementation of this strategic plan. In order to find out how this process occurred, the following section will systematically assess these three phases by examining their 1) problem definition, 2) participants, 3) recipients and 4) provided solutions (outcome) accompanied by a concise examination of this outcome. This information will be used to test the PvsP-variables in chapter 6.

¹¹¹ The White House, 'Executive Order 12852 of June 29, 1993'.

¹¹² UNDESA, 'Institutional aspects of sustainable development in the United States of America, *'Intergrated decision-making'*.

¹¹³ The White House, *President's Council on Sustainable Development*, (Online archive by the American Government, Undated). There, 'Publications', accessed via <https://clintonwhitehouse2.archives.gov/PCSD/Publications/index.html> (20th April, 2018).

4.3.1 – The First Phase (June 1993 – March 1996)¹¹⁴

The table below shows the examination of the PCSD’s first report: *Sustainable America*.

<i>Problem:</i>	<p>The need for a coordinated strategy answering to the international call for sustainable development (<i>Agenda 21</i>).</p> <p>As mentioned before, there was an impetus to incorporate <i>Agenda 21</i> into American policymaking. As observed in chapter 3, however, the recommendations of <i>Agenda 21</i> concern many different sectors and require a shift in the mentality of society. Taking <i>Agenda 21</i>’s contents together with the fragmented policies of the different agencies, it seems logical that a centralized approach (PCSD) was needed to implement these policy recommendations.</p>
<i>Participants:</i>	<p>President Bill Clinton, A council with chairs for representatives of both ‘industry’ and ‘environment’ (i.e. stakeholders)¹¹⁵, United States citizens.</p> <p>Bill Clinton can be seen as one of the participants of the PCSD. His mandate was needed for the creation of the PCSD, and he therefore instigated the whole process. The other participants are the members of the council itself. Quite similar to the Brundtland-commission, the PCSD aimed to be as diverse as possible in its composition to create an inclusive strategy plan. For example, the council also held public meetings in different communities to combine public interests and concerns with entrepreneurial and expert opinions.¹¹⁶</p>
<i>Recipients:</i>	<p>The Presidential Administration and the President himself.</p>
<i>Outcome:</i>	<p>The PCSD’s first report <i>Sustainable America: A New Consensus for Prosperity, Opportunity, and a Healthy Environment for the Future</i>, released in 1996.</p>

The contents of *Sustainable America* might be seen as the American tailored version of *Agenda 21*’s recommendations. It is stressed that the recommendations in the report do not only concern the government, but the private sector and citizens as well. This is because the PCSD argues that for these recommendations to work, they require a societal value-change which cannot be overcome by just the government.¹¹⁷ This notion is embedded in the belief that proper change cannot be realized through coercion and negative rights, but has to be intrinsically motivated as

¹¹⁴ The President’s Council on Sustainable Development (henceforth PCSD), *Sustainable America: a new consensus for prosperity, opportunity, and a healthy environment for the future* (Online archive by The White House, original from 1996).

¹¹⁵ PCSD, *Sustainable America*, ‘Preface’.

¹¹⁶ Ibidem.

¹¹⁷ PCSD, *Sustainable America*, ‘Introduction’.

well.¹¹⁸ For the nation to commonly change their values, the report recommends to try moving from conflict to collaboration. To achieve this, the government should:

*“[...] convene and facilitate, shifting from prescribing behavior to supporting responsibility by setting goals, creating incentives, monitoring performance, and providing information.”*¹¹⁹

The PCSD recommends different goals which they find to be interdependent and therefore essential for creating a workable sustainable economy. These goals are aimed mainly towards education and inclusion of American citizens, the conservation of a (healthy) environment, and the adoption of an international leadership strategy in the implementation of sustainable development policies.¹²⁰ These are 1) increasing the cost-effectiveness of the current environmental regulation 2) creating an alternative environmental management system combining efforts of the government, environmental agencies, and firms, 3) extend environmental product responsibility throughout the production chain, 4) shift the tax policies in favor of less-damaging production, 5) eliminate government subsidies opposing sustainable development goals, 6) utilize market incentives (such as recycling and energy-efficient investments), and 7) create partnerships between all levels of government (local, state, and federal).¹²¹ Additional policies regarding education and the acquisition of data are an integral part of this equation.¹²² These recommendations closely follow the *Agenda 21*'s linking pins identified in chapter 3.

The report also concerns policy recommendation on natural resources, which include the preservation and/or conservation of these resources, creating incentives for stewardship, managing forests, and managing marine and fresh water diversity.¹²³ The United States population itself is also explicitly mentioned, encouraging policies ensuring a stronger role for women and immigrants, as well as better means of services regarding population control (family planning and reproductive health services).¹²⁴ These policies contribute to the creation of a strengthened

¹¹⁸ Tridico, 'Sustainable America in the twenty-first century', 227 – 228.

¹¹⁹ PCSD, *Sustainable America*, 'Chapter 2: Building a new Framework for a new century'..

¹²⁰ Ibidem, 'Chapter 1: national goals toward sustainable development'.

¹²¹ Ibidem.

¹²² Ibidem, 'Chapter 3: information and education'.

¹²³ Ibidem, 'Chapter 5: natural resources stewardship'.

¹²⁴ Ibidem, 'Chapter 6: U.S. population and sustainability'.

‘sustainable community’.¹²⁵ Lastly, the report also recommends taking up a leading role scientific and economic endeavors regarding sustainable development, which are to be achieved in collaboration with NGO’s.¹²⁶

It can be seen that this report closely follows the recommendations of *Agenda 21*, but tailors them to fit the United States’ society. Almost all *Agenda 21*-recommendations are taken into account (except for those targeting developing countries). *Sustainable America* essentially provides an ‘Americanized’ version of *Agenda 21*’s recommendations, but is still lacked real tangible policy plans for governmental agencies to implement.

¹²⁵ Ibidem, ‘Chapter 4: strengthening communities’.

¹²⁶ Ibidem, ‘Chapter 7: international leadership’.

4.3.2 – The Second Phase (May 1996 - January 1997)¹²⁷

The table below shows the examination of the PCSD’s second report: *Building a Consensus*.

Problem:	<p>The need for coordination in implementing the tailored recommendations of <i>Sustainable America</i></p> <p>Although <i>Sustainable America</i> did spur enthusiasm for the concept of sustainable development, there was still a need for leadership and coordinated action on a federal level.¹²⁸</p>
Participants:	<p>The President, Vice-President Al Gore, and the PCSD</p> <p>The President prolonged the life of the council by two years based on the results of the preceding phase. To help implement the recommendations of <i>Sustainable America</i>, Al Gore was tasked with leading this implementation within the Presidential Administration. In order to accomplish this, Gore led the ‘Interagency Working Group on Sustainable Development’ which represented all major federal agencies and departments with a domestic focus, and looked how to jointly implement the recommended policies.¹²⁹</p>
Recipients:	<p>The Presidential Administration and the President himself.</p>
Outcome:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The PCSD’s second report <i>Building a Consensus: A Progress report on Sustainable America</i>, released in 1997. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Three Interagency Working Groups on Sustainable Development o Three task forces - Follow-up report: <i>The Road to Sustainable Development: A Snapshot of Activities in the United States</i>, presented to the President in March of 1997. <p>This report was published one month before the next UNCED-conference (Rio +5) and assessed the progress made thus far to fulfill the commitments made with at the Earth Summit of 1992.¹³⁰</p>

¹²⁷ PCSD, *Building on consensus: a progress report on Sustainable America*, (Online archive by The White House, original from 1997).

¹²⁸ PCSD, *Bulding a consensus*, ‘A letter to the President’.

¹²⁹ Ibidem, ‘Introduction’.

¹³⁰ PCSD, *The road to sustainable development: a snapshot of activities in the United States*, (Online archive by The White House, original from 1997).

Having assessed the progress made with the implementation of their recommended policies thitherto, the PCSD recommends three important actions for the President to fully integrate sustainable development into his second term agenda. This includes participating in all international activities which regard sustainable development.¹³¹

Building a Consensus also describes creation and progress of three task-forces. The first of which, the ‘Innovative Local, State, And Regional Approaches Task Force’, knows members from several economic sectors, federal departments and agencies, social sectors, and environmental agencies. The task force aided the creation and ensures continuation of the Joint Center of Sustainable Communities (JCSC), which was created to aid and provide tools for locally elected officials to create sustainable communities and combine metropolitan and rural interests.¹³²

The second ‘New National Opportunities Task Force’ was asked to launch initiatives which would aid and monitor the implementation of *Sustainable America’s* recommendations.¹³³ This task force looks into collaboration between citizens, businesses, governmental and non-governmental organizations. Furthermore, this task force works on increasing the idea of Extended Product Responsibility (i.e. increasing awareness about the ramifications of consumerism).¹³⁴

The third ‘International Leadership Task Force’ was asked to transport the message and findings of the PCSD over to international audiences, coordinate the PCSD’s role at the UNCED meeting in April of 1997, and recommend the next steps for the council in 1997.¹³⁵

Aside from these task forces, Al Gore chaired three Interagency Work Groups to coordinate *Sustainable America’s* implementation on a federal level. They host federal strategy meetings between the Department of Agriculture, Department of Commerce Manufacturing Extension Partnership, the Small Business Administration Small Business Development Centers, and others to find common ground and models for collaborations between them. They are also tasked with working together with the Department of Education to widen understanding of energy efficiency and pollution reduction at the school level. The expected results of these Working Groups are an information access system, coordination of federal agency development and analysis of sustainable

¹³¹ PCSD, *Bulding a consensus*, ‘Chapter 6: overarching recommendations’.

¹³² Ibidem, ‘Chapter 1: Innovative Local, State, and Regional Approaches Task Force report’.

¹³³ Ibidem, ‘Chapter 2: New National Opportunities Task Force report’.

¹³⁴ Ibidem.

¹³⁵ Ibidem, ‘Chapter 3: International Leadership Task Force report’.

development indicators, and the creation of regular reports which provide information on the progress of sustainable development in the United States.¹³⁶

4.3.3 – The Third Phase (April 1997 – February 1999)¹³⁷

The table below shows the examination of the PCSD’s final report: *Towards a sustainable America*.

<i>Problem:</i>	<p>The need for specialization in certain areas of sustainable development and a wrap-up of the PCSD’s activities.</p> <p>At the end of the second phase, President Clinton asked the PCSD to focus their efforts on 1) policies which could reduce greenhouse gas emissions, 2) plan a future-proof environmental management system, 3) policies which would strengthen communities and partnerships, and 4) policies which would stimulate US leadership in international sustainable development policies.¹³⁸</p>
<i>Participants:</i>	<p>The President, Vice-President Al Gore, and the PCSD</p> <p>Once again, the President is the primary task-giver of this phase. Al Gore is included for his continued work on the Interagency Working Groups.</p>
<i>Recipients:</i>	<p>The Presidential Administration, the general public.</p> <p>While the other reports were more or less meant for the Presidential Administration itself, it is clearly visible that this last report is aimed more towards informing the general public. Informing the public on sustainable development seems logical, since it is one of the main goals of the PCSD (and <i>Agenda 21</i>).</p>
<i>Outcome:</i>	<p>Report: <i>Towards a Sustainable America: Advancing Prosperity, Opportunity, and a Healthy Environment for the 21st Century</i>, released in 1999.</p>

This publication is essentially a popular version of the previous PCSD reports. In *Towards a Sustainable America*, the message and scope of the PCSD is presented, their findings throughout their active years are reported on, and the PCSD evaluates on itself (albeit mostly positive).¹³⁹ The council concludes that ‘*collaboration, stewardship, and individual responsibility*’ are the main ingredients in creating a sustainable America. From their experience, they found that community

¹³⁶ Ibidem, ‘Chapter 4: Interagency Working Group reports’.

¹³⁷ PCSD, *Towards a sustainable America: advancing prosperity, opportunity, and a healthy environment for the 21st century* (Online publication by The White House, 1999).

¹³⁸ PCSD, *Towards a sustainable America*, 14 – 15.

¹³⁹ Ibidem, 16.

development had a positive effect on sustainable incentives and vice versa. Sustainability needs to be understood on three levels, on an individual level, on an economic level (i.e. sellable on Wall Street), and on a global level. This understanding is critical in facilitating these main ingredients.¹⁴⁰

The report is divided in several chapters, which restate the recommendations for a sustainable strategy and the implementation thereof. Additionally, in accordance with their task, this report does focus more on the four focal points requested by the President. Protecting the climate can be an important and integral part of the building of sustainable communities. However, evidence for a changing climate (regardless of human interference) is already in place and adaptive responses to this change should also be encouraged. Both should complement rather than contradict each other.¹⁴¹

Systematic action has to be undertaken to build and support sustainable communities. The first of which is providing information and technically assisting incentives. Secondly, economic incentives and financial assistance should be provided to give these communities a standing within the economy. Lastly, partnerships should be made as well as the endorsement of local ability to implement sustainable measures. Here one of the most intrinsic motivations of the PCSD's approach is given; the issues and opportunities for these communities exceed the seemingly arbitrary boundaries of US jurisdictions. These boundaries can be overcome by creating partnerships and coalitions between officials of these jurisdictions.¹⁴² Government agencies (such as the EPA and the Department of Agriculture) can also coordinate efforts to increase sustainability throughout the nation.¹⁴³

In conclusion, the transition to sustainability will come down to actions taken at the community level across the nation, led by innovations in ecology, buildings, utilities, natural resources, etcetera. In linking all stakeholders (communities, economic players, and the governmental institutional framework), a synergy can be created which can replicate successes and develop a true sustainable community.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴⁰ Ibidem, 19 - 20.

¹⁴¹ Ibidem, 44.

¹⁴² Ibidem 78.

¹⁴³ Ibidem, 79 - 96.

¹⁴⁴ Ibidem, 103.

5 – Agenda 21 in the Netherlands

With regard to environmental policymaking, The Netherlands usually fares relatively well.¹⁴⁵ The country has ratified several climate agreements and has been present on almost all climate conventions. Climate change and other scientific proof is generally acknowledged and therefore part of the political debate.¹⁴⁶ Furthermore, The Netherlands also have to answer to the overarching climate policies of the European Union, which will increasingly influence the shape of Dutch environmental policy.¹⁴⁷

Generally, the government is formed by at least two political parties which form the majority of seats in parliament. Because multiple parties are needed to form a majority, the political orientation of a cabinet has to be built on concessions. The Dutch call this process of creating concessions ‘polderen’.¹⁴⁸ This consequently means that a cabinet’s policies are also built on these concessions, which according to Tsebelis’ theory means they are durable in nature.¹⁴⁹ However, if a majority is reached, these discussions can fade away after the formative period, especially if congruence is reached between the Dutch First and Second Chambers. If this is the case, there is effectively only one (institutional) veto-player, which translates to high levels of political efficacy.¹⁵⁰ The current National Environmental Policy Plan, for example, is only the fourth alteration of the original which was made 30 years ago. However, this strength can also be one of the systems’ weaknesses. Reaching a consensus about policies can take a long time, especially in divided cabinets. While the policies themselves might be durable, the political efficacy of such a cabinet might be considered lacking in speed.

To complete the source material needed for the comparison between a presidential and parliamentary system, this chapter will follow a similar structure to that of the preceding chapter. The political and societal context will be examined historiographically, and the policy documents that followed the introduction of *Agenda 21* will be systematically examined through the

¹⁴⁵ Hans Bressers, Theo De Bruijn, and Kris Lulofs, ‘De evaluatie van de Nederlandse milieuconvenanten’, *Beleidswetenschap* 3 (2004), 242 – 270, there 242 – 248.

& Cramer, *De groene golf*, 131 – 132.

¹⁴⁶ Cramer, *De groene golf*, 111 – 114.

¹⁴⁷ Dave Huitema, ‘In een groen, groen polderland: de mix tussen corporatisme en lobbyisme in het Nederlandse milieubeleid,’ *Beleid en Maatschappij* 32 (2005) 4, 199-210, aldaar 205 – 206.

¹⁴⁸ Lijphart, Arend, ‘Consociational democracy’, *World Politics* 21 (1969), 207 – 225.

¹⁴⁹ Tsebelis, ‘Decision making in political systems’, 321.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibidem*, 310.

aforementioned four points. This examination will show that the ruling cabinet during the implementation of *Agenda 21* was a majority cabinet, and that policy plans made by this cabinet were subsequently made rather swiftly without a lot of opposition (signifying no veto-player interference). In the Netherlands, strategizing *Agenda 21* proved to be a relatively simple endeavor due to the existence of a prior strategy on sustainable development, a favorable governmental composition, and an efficacious chain of delegation. However, this lack of opposition did prove to make the NEPP2 less elaborate and encompassing than the PCSD's strategy.

5.1 – The depillarization of politics in an international context

When *Agenda 21* was released in 1993, Dutch Prime Minister Ruud Lubbers was in the last year of his third cabinet (Lubbers III). Lubbers, who came from the Christian Democratic Appeal (CDA), formed this cabinet with the Labor Party (PvdA). These parties had a majority in both the political Chambers.¹⁵¹ Similar to this cabinet, the preceding cabinet of Lubbers (Lubbers II) also had a majority in both Chambers. However, this cabinet was comprised of Lubbers' party (CDA) and the People's Party for Freedom and Democratization (VVD). The VVD and PvdA are liberal and socialist parties respectively, altering the orientation of both these cabinets. However, because the CDA is more center-right in its orientation and concessions (or *polderen*) had to be done, both the PvdA and VVD were pulled towards the political center.

Although these majorities were achieved, it should be mentioned that the Netherlands were in the continuing process of depillarization which started in the 1960's and slowly eradicated the consociationalist structures of the country.¹⁵² Consociationalism goes hand in hand with party loyalty, which ensured the political power of established parties such as the CDA, the PvdA, and the VVD.¹⁵³ Due to the process of dipillarization and increased political dissatisfaction, this loyalty started to shrink.¹⁵⁴ Especially CDA and PvdA lost their credibility after introducing cutbacks in welfare-state provisions. These factors culminated in the 1994 elections, in which half of the electorate voted for a different party than before. CDA became part of the opposition, and the

¹⁵¹ The Dutch senate is called the 'First Chamber', the House of Representatives is called the 'Second Chamber'.

¹⁵² Friso Wielenga, *Geschiedenis van Nederland: van Opstand tot heden* (Amsterdam, 2013). 349 – 350. & Cramer, *De groene golf*, 25 - 27.

¹⁵³ Lijphart, 'Consociational democracy', 207 - 222.

¹⁵⁴ Cramer, *De groene golf*, 89 – 90.

PvdA shrunk significantly.¹⁵⁵ The succeeding cabinet, led by Prime Minister Wim Kok, was colloquially called ‘purple’ because it was comprised of a coalition from different political orientations (social-democrats, social-liberals and liberals). This was the first time, since the adoption of universal suffrage (1917), the cabinet was not comprised of any Christian Democrats.¹⁵⁶

In the international context, the Netherlands is an integral part of the European Union. This means that in terms of trading and (inter)national policy, the Netherlands have to answer to the European Parliament. This also holds true for Dutch environmental policies, which are also monitored and partly shaped by European supranational institutions.¹⁵⁷

Intervening in society is an expected and accepted role of the Dutch government. Although there are still hardline liberalists in Dutch politics, the benefits of governmental intervention (welfare programs, infrastructure, legislation, etc.) are generally understood. Political debate is usually not about if the government should intervene, but rather to what extent.

5.2 – A Strong Foundation: Sustainability in the Netherlands prior to Agenda 21

Prior to the release of *Agenda 21*, the National Commission for Development Strategy (NCO) was established in 1970.¹⁵⁸ This commission involved stimulating the debate on sustainable development between around fifty NGO’s from different sectors of society.¹⁵⁹ However, sustainable development according to the Brundtland-definition proliferated two years after the publication of *Our Common Future*.

In 1989, which was the last year of Lubbers II, the Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment (VROM) published an environmental plan known as the National Environmental Policy Plan (NEPP).¹⁶⁰ The VROM was the appropriate organ for information and policies regarding the area of sustainable development.¹⁶¹ The VROM was assisted by the ministries of Agriculture, Nature Management and Fisheries, Economic Affairs, Transport, Public

¹⁵⁵ Wielenga, *Geschiedenis van Nederland*, 339– 350.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibidem*, 349 – 353.

¹⁵⁷ Cramer, *De groene golf*, 131 – 132.

¹⁵⁸ Dutch: Nationale Commissie voor Ontwikkelingsstrategie. The NCO later evolved into the National Commission for International Cooperation and Sustainable Development (NCICSD).

¹⁵⁹ UNDESA, ‘Institutional Aspects of Sustainable Development in the Netherlands’, (Online document by the United Nations, 2001). There: ‘Integrated Decision-Making’.

¹⁶⁰ Dutch: Nationaal Milieubeleidsplan (NMP)

¹⁶¹ Cramer, *De groene golf*, 95 – 98.

works and Water Management, and the ministry of Education, Culture and Science. The scientific background (measurements and statistics) for the NEPP were provided by the Central Bureau of Statistics and the Central Planning Bureau.¹⁶²

This NEPP analyzed the status quo of Dutch environmental policy. Inspired by *Our Common Future*, it expressed the need to break with the then current environmental trends. It was signed by all ministers of the contributing ministries.¹⁶³ Following this first NEPP, the government, provinces, municipalities and water-boards agreed to work together with implementing environmental policies. A structural and more professional organization of these political institutions followed, ensuring policy congruence.¹⁶⁴

One year later, an updated plan by the name of NEPP+ was released by Lubbers II. This new plan addressed some shortcomings of the first NEPP, as well as the call for a faster implementation of the policies overall. NEPP+ also ensured environmental policy to be the third most important pillar in government policymaking.¹⁶⁵

NEPP and NEPP+ already consider sustainable topics such as recycling, energy-saving, reducing the emission of carbon-dioxide, and nature conservation and development.¹⁶⁶ In accordance with *Our Common Future*, responsible economic development is a main driving force behind the NEPP; production and consumption can only be deemed sustainable if they do not affect the environment (short or long term). This also means that sustainable economic development is the only possible basis for stable future welfare.¹⁶⁷ With this established plans and the existence of a coordinated implementation thereof, the Netherlands had a strong foundation to build their implementation of *Agenda 21* on.

¹⁶² UNDESA, 'Institutional aspects of sustainable development in the Netherlands', 'Information'.

¹⁶³ Ibidem, 'Integrated Decision-Making'.

¹⁶⁴ Ibidem.

¹⁶⁵ Ministerie van Volkshuisvesting, Ruimtelijke Ordening en Milieubeheer (henceforth: VROM), *Nationaal Milieubeleidsplan-plus* (The Hague 1990) 5.

¹⁶⁶ VROM, *Nationaal Milieubeleidsplan-plus*, 5 – 15.

¹⁶⁷ Ibidem, 16 – 19.

5.3 – Agenda 21 in the Netherlands: The Second National Environmental Policy Plan

Contrary to the United States, no formal council had been established to integrate *Agenda 21* (i.e. sustainable development) into Dutch society. However, as the preceding subchapters show, several coordination mechanisms already existed which incorporated views similar to those portrayed in *Agenda 21*.¹⁶⁸

Similarly to the PCSD, an advisory report was drafted before the implementation of *Agenda 21*. The minister of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment (VROM) and the minister of Economic Affairs asked for an advisory report from the Social-Economic Council (SER), one of the primary advisory organs of the Dutch government. This report concerned the state of the environment in relation to (economic) development, and specifically positioned itself in relation to UNCED and *Agenda 21*.¹⁶⁹ Subsequently, NEPP2 was created to incorporate the recommendations of *Agenda 21*. Similarly to the case of the United States, this section will identify 1) the problem, 2) the participants, 3) the recipients, 4) and outcome of this problem. This is accompanied by a concise examination of the contents of these documents. In the next chapter, these results will be used in comparison with the results of the US case to evaluate the PvsP-variables.

5.3.1 – The SER-advisory report¹⁷⁰

The table below shows the context and contents of the advisory report of the SER mentioned above.

<i>Problem:</i>	The need for an assessment of 1) the ecological basis for economic growth, and 2) the international trade relations, financing, and technological-transfer to developing countries. This problem was formulated by the Dutch government before the UNCED conference. This full report, however, was released one month after the release of <i>Agenda 21</i> . ¹⁷¹
<i>Participants:</i>	The Social-Economic Council (SER), ministers of VROM and Economic Affairs.
<i>Recipients:</i>	Ministers of VROM, Economic Affairs, and Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation / the Dutch government.
<i>Outcome:</i>	Report <i>Milieu en Ontwikkeling (Environment and Development)</i> released in March of 1993.

¹⁶⁸ UNDESA, 'Institutional aspects of sustainable development in the Netherlands', 'Integrated Decision-Making'.

¹⁶⁹ Sociaal Economische Raad (henceforth SER), *Milieu en Ontwikkeling* (The Hague 1993) 5.

¹⁷⁰ SER, *Milieu en Ontwikkeling*.

¹⁷¹ *Ibidem*, 107 – 108.

This report mostly delves into the idea that the ecological basis for growth is determined by the amount of resources an ecosystem can supply. According to the SER, this is determined by the population, size, the composition of production and consumption, and the level of biotechnological and environmental-technological inventions. SER advises that the concept of ‘the polluter pays’ should be embraced, together with the consequences it brings for industrialized countries. Another important topic is the role of international coordination, which is needed to tackle cross-boundary environmental problems. There should be a certain level of respect for differences in national environmental strategies (with the exception of some basic rules). However, from countries from within the EC (European Community) and OECD-members, certain expectations can and should be had. Their environmental policy should be compliant with their rate of development.¹⁷²

As for national policies, the SER advises that the Netherlands should focus primarily on consumption patterns. Closing waste-cycles, ensuring proper recycling, stimulating the demand for sustainable goods, and sustainable consumerism should be on the top of the priority-list. These measures should subsequently be promoted to EC and OECD countries. In the case of developing countries, information about climate change as well as sustainable technologies should be transported to behold these countries from the same mistakes made by readily industrialized nations.¹⁷³

It is stressed that the Netherlands should stimulate the creation of international treaties regarding sustainable development. *Agenda 21* is therefore only seen as the starting point from where priorities of different countries were sorted, but not yet as the solution. UNCED did not facilitate real change, and the SER believes this can only be accomplished through continued international cooperation with the UN, EC, World Bank, IMF, and other relevant interest groups. Additionally, international trade treaties such as GATT should include pollution taxes in commodity-prices to stimulate sustainable production.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷² Ibidem, 5 – 6.

¹⁷³ Ibidem, 7 – 8.

¹⁷⁴ Ibidem, 9 – 18.

5.3.2 – The Second Environmental Policy Plan: NEPP2

The table below shows the context and contents of the *Second Environmental Policy Plan* (NEPP2).

<i>Problem:</i>	The need for a national answer to the release of <i>Agenda 21</i> and the suggestions of the SER.
<i>Participants:</i>	Minister of VROM, aided by the ministers of Economic Affairs, Agriculture, Infrastructure, Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation.
<i>Recipients:</i>	The House of Representatives (Second Chamber)
<i>Outcome:</i>	The <i>Second National Environmental Policy Plan</i> (NEPP2), subtitled <i>Environment as a Yardstick</i> , released in December of 1993.

NEPP2 is a continuation of the strategies readily established in the NEPP and NEPP+. However, the document also explicitly differentiates itself as being the strategic answer to *Agenda 21* and the accompanying agreements made at UNCED. The NEPP2 contains a policy plan which was to be implemented between 1995 and 1998.¹⁷⁵ In assessing its contents, it can be seen that the advice of the SER has been followed closely.

The NEPP2 mentions several specific focal points on different levels (municipal to nation-wide), such as stricter control on permits, producer and consumer behavioral change, creating new environmental laws (and enforcing them), and combatting drought.¹⁷⁶ The NEPP2, just like its predecessors, uses the Brundtland-definition of sustainability. The main focal points of the NEPP2 are to 1) intensify the execution of existing environmental policies (i.e. the first NEPP), 2) create additional measures in the areas where goals are not met, and 3) achieve sustainable production and consumption. These three points are to be regarded with international diplomacy and economic growth in mind. The government's role is to create the ideal conditions for the target groups to fulfill their own responsibilities.¹⁷⁷

In compliance with the SER's advice, the latter of these focal points is the most comprehensive. In order to achieve an increase in sustainable consumption and production, producers and consumers have to adjust to the regenerative limits of the environment. Government institutions are tasked with researching the relation between the environment, environmental

¹⁷⁵ Ministerie van Volkshuisvesting, Ruimtelijke Ordening en Milieubeheer Centrale Directie Voorlichting (henceforth VROM CDV), *Nationaal Milieubeleidsplan 2: Milieu als Maatstaf* (The Hague 1993) 3.

¹⁷⁶ VROM CDV, *Nationaal Milieubeleidsplan 2*, 6.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibidem*, 7.

behavior and public opinion.¹⁷⁸ Prior research has shown that a change in consumer patterns is possible if it is made marketable for them (i.e. are proper substitutions).¹⁷⁹

A separate chapter in the NEPP2 is devoted specifically to the ramifications of *Agenda 21* for Dutch environmental policy. On an international level, the Netherlands should aim to play an active role in stimulating new initiatives in the field of sustainable development and environmental policy. A role in which the Netherlands can only be taken seriously if they have a strong domestic policy and are serious about their international obligations on the matter. The international scope is shaped by that of the European Community, which focusses on ratifying international agreements on environmental goals, the way in which these goals can be achieved, and how this will be financed. In establishing this international role, there can be no trickling-down of environmental problems to other countries. To make *Agenda 21* work in an international perspective, the alliance with Middle and Eastern Europe has to be strengthened as well.¹⁸⁰

NEPP2 follows through with the original NEPP's categorization in target groups. These groups differ from the 'major groups' mentioned in *Agenda 21*, and seem to be based more on workable economic sectors than the diverse social groups of *Agenda 21*.¹⁸¹ Easily accessible groups already headed into the right direction (e.g. refineries, industry, and agriculture). However, the document pleads for a distinction between these relatively easily accessible groups, and harder to reach target groups such as consumers and small to middle-sized businesses. These groups are harder to address with targeted legislative measures, and are therefore to be addressed with socio-economic instruments aided by intermediary organization such as interest groups, energy-companies, and environmental organizations.¹⁸² Using socio-economic instruments from the bottom-up, and legislative instruments from top-to-bottom, it might become possible to target these groups more effectively. This would entail increasing education and awareness on the ramifications of consumerism, supplemented by creating different covenants with these companies. These can take the form of fiscal policies, the introduction of emission-rights and energy taxes, as well as a demand for transparent and thorough information.¹⁸³

¹⁷⁸ RIVM and SCP.

¹⁷⁹ VROM, *Nationaal Milieubeleidsplan 2*, 14.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibidem*, 15.

¹⁸¹ *Ibidem*, 103.

¹⁸² *Ibidem*, 5 – 6.

¹⁸³ *Ibidem*, 11 – 12.

The NEPP2 further elaborates on specific measures per target group, which are based on bureaucratic measures like permits and emission caps. The document presents target reductions of different factors such as CO2 emissions, the use of propellants, acidification, drought, desiccation, etc.¹⁸⁴ For the larger groups, the aim is to do this via phased reductions in an attempt to make the transition as smooth as possible. This is mostly a continuation of practices already set in motion through the first NEPP, but they are supplemented by additional measures compliant with more recent scientific insights.¹⁸⁵

Retail businesses and consumers are more difficult to address, because storeowners are not fully aware of the environmental implications of their businesses and the products they sell. To achieve the desired change, the government aims to educate consumers and producers about the environmental impact consumerism, restricting the spread of polluting materials in consumer items and enforcing energy-saving measures by law.¹⁸⁶

To further the discussion between the ‘major groups’ mentioned in Agenda 21, the Platform for Sustainable Development was founded to facilitate and further the public discussion on *Agenda 21*. One of the major goals of this platform was to incorporate women and youth in this discussion. Furthermore, this platform was also tasked with following the follow-up developments of UNCED.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁴ Ibidem, 16.

¹⁸⁵ Ibidem, 16 – 19.

¹⁸⁶ Ibidem, 19 – 23.

¹⁸⁷ Ibidem, 197.

6 – Case comparison: presidential versus parliamentary policymaking

The preceding chapters analyzed how the governments of the United States and the Netherlands responded to the release of *Agenda 21* by analyzing the problems, participants, recipients, and outcomes of their policy strategies (PCSD reports and NEPP2). This analysis shows that both countries took the release of *Agenda 21* rather seriously by tailoring the recommendations to fit their specific countries' context. However, it can also be seen that these processes differed from each other. What differences can be found and to what extent can these differences be attributed to their difference in regime-type as outlined in the PvsP debate in Chapter 2?

This chapter will chart the most important differences and will try to explain them through the 'veto-player composition' and 'chain of delegation' theories. It will show that the veto-player and chain of delegation variables are not directly applicable to explain the differences between these two cases, but that the theories behind them can still be used and expanded to fit these specific cases. After these minor tweaks, the unusual route of the US (creation of a separate council) and the political efficacy of the Netherlands let themselves be explained quite comprehensively.

6.1 – Similarities and differences in the interpretation and implementation of Agenda 21

As established in Chapter 3, *Agenda 21*'s recommendations were very broad. This meant that countries' governments were free to implement them as they deemed just. This subchapter will compare the cases to pinpoint where and how these two governments differed in their historiographical context as well as their sustainable policymaking process.

6.1.1 – Sustainability prior to Agenda 21

Looking at sustainability in the United States before *Agenda 21*, it can be observed that there were already various different environmental agencies in place. The first real hints towards sustainable development, however, were the *Stockholm Declaration* and the *Endangered Species Act*, which essentially concerned themes of sustainable development (without calling it that). Hereafter, the PCSD was the first real governmental reaction to the concept of sustainable development, essentially starting sustainable policymaking from scratch.

In the Netherlands, environmental concerns were already a part of the policy of ministries. Furthermore, the first NEPP was created after the release of *Our Common Future* and thereby

incorporated sustainable development in Dutch policymaking. With the NEPP+, sustainable development even became one of the most important focal points of the government. Thus, by the time *Agenda 21* came around, sustainable development had already been (partly) incorporated in Dutch policymaking.

6.1.2 – Problems and participants

In implementing *Agenda 21*, both governments were faced different sets of problems and subsequently found different solutions for these problems. For the United States, the major problem was the absence of policy congruency between different governmental agencies. *Agenda 21*, however, is characterized by its appeal to make sustainable development an integral part of the fabric of society. The PCSD, which was created by Clinton's mandate, was therefore tasked with the creation of a centralized policy strategy for all agencies to follow. Furthermore, this council consisted of a varied amount of representatives from different sectors of society, in an attempt to make their strategy as inclusive as possible (i.e. incorporate all stakeholders). The council was later tasked with aiding the implementation of their own recommendations, as well as with specialized in-depth assessments of these policies. The council's lifespan of six years signifies the intensity and elaborateness of the process.

Much like the US, *Agenda 21* had to be tailored to fit the Netherlands' specific institutional and (inter)national context. The Netherlands, however, did not struggle with achieving policy congruence at the time. Both NEPP's show that ministries can (and will) work together to create agreed-upon policies. Additionally, they are aided by advisory organ(s). One of those organs is the SER, which tailored *Agenda 21* to fit the Netherlands' context at the request of three ministers. SER advised the government on a national and international level. Following this advisory report, the Netherlands only faced the 'problem' of forging these recommendations into a policy plan. This task was to be performed by the ministries involved with *Agenda 21*'s contents (most prominently VROM), and could build on the original NEPP.

6.1.3 – The methods and contents of the PCSD and NEPP2

The PCSD was created to identify all stakeholders and find a workable sustainable strategy among them.¹⁸⁸ When comparing the recommendations of the PCSD with those in *Agenda 21*, it can be seen that the PCSD follows *Agenda 21* quite closely. In describing their own tasks, the council finds that they forge consensus on policy, disseminate information, foster and report on implementation activities and evaluate the progress of this implementation.¹⁸⁹ *Sustainable America* mainly stresses improvements in information gathering, cooperation between different levels of society, the creation of more awareness among people, and the support local initiatives. All of this has to be unifiable with economic growth and prosperity.

There is almost no judiciary aspect to the reports of the PCSD. The few legislative measures that are given seem to be more steering and rewarding rather than enforcing negative rights. All recommendations are relatively vague and task agencies, departments, and local governments with altering their strategy to fit the PCSD's recommendations. Gore's Interagency Working Groups on Sustainable Development had to bring the agencies together in order to create congruent policies compliant with *Sustainable America*.

The PCSD repeatedly stresses the importance of structural social change. Not only did the council conclude that social values of American citizens had to change, but they promoted social integration as well because they saw that the government could not (and, perhaps, should not) facilitate these changes through forced coercion. Initiatives like the JCSC helped foster these changes on a local level. Their so-called 'building of a consensus' is strategized by proposing an interconnected framework that covers all layers of society on a local, statewide, national, and international scale.

In terms of international cooperation, the PCSD advises the government to take on an international leading role. It is advised that the findings (and future results) of the PCSD should be communicated with the rest of the world. International coordination and influence seem to just as important as the domestic strategy.

In the Dutch case, the first NEPP was already largely compliant with sustainable development. NEPP2 expanded upon its predecessor by making it compliant with *Agenda 21*. It argues that increased education should make consumers (and producers) more aware of the impact

¹⁸⁸ UNDESA, 'Institutional aspects of sustainable development in the United States of America'.

¹⁸⁹ PCSD, *The Road to Sustainable Development*, 'Introduction'.

of consumerism. The NEPP2 also stresses that individuals should not only become aware of their impact, but should also feel a sense of responsibility on the matter. This should be achieved with both socio-cultural instruments (educating, awareness, and providing feasible alternatives) and legislative instruments (taxation and/or excises). Policies are based on scientific research, or there is a call for an increase in research and monitoring to make sure these policies are executed correctly or are in need of improvement. NEPP2 also stresses, however, that all these policies have to be implemented with regard for sustained economic growth.

The largest difference with the PCSD's recommendations is that NEPP2 is made by a ministry in collaboration with the other ministries. Therefore, NEPP2 is a tangible policy plan which contents could directly be used by the government.

Like the PCSD, NEPP2 advocates an active role in the international community. As can be seen in the recommendations of the SER, international collaboration is one of the main recommended focal points. Actively working together with the European Union, OECD, Middle East and developing countries is advised as having a high priority. However, this collaboration can only be justified if the domestic policies are in order.

6.1.4 – Comparing the PCSD and Agenda 21

Comparing both policy interpretations, it is evident that both countries follow the recommendations of *Agenda 21* (as identified in subchapter 3.2) quite closely. The most recurring factor in these documents is the need to raise awareness under consumers, producers, and retailers about the impact of their consumption. Another shared aspect is the need for good information gathering and monitoring. In both cases, comprehensive information should form the basis for (future) sustainable policies. Also, an increase in education and awareness is to be found in both reports, as well as the need for the creation for a framework which encompasses all layers of society and government. Compliant with the Brundtland-definition, all policies must not hinder a continuation of economic growth.

Both countries are ambitious in their future role in the sustainable development discourse, as signified by both countries' creation of institutions which monitor and coordinate sustainable development, the developments with UNCED, and the countries' role in the global sustainability discourse. However, where the Netherlands says it wants to cooperate and incentivize, the United States want to have a leading role on an international level. This could be explained through the

countries international leverage (US are a world power) and their political affiliations (Netherlands is bound to the European Community).

Aside from the main themes, however, the actual policymaking processes are very different in many respects. The most obvious is the nature of these documents. The first report of the PCSD is merely advisory in nature, and the other two are progress reports of its coordinating role. NEPP2 is actually a fully-fledged policy plan wherein specific targets and goals are presented and made. The PCSD talks about what *should* be done, whilst NEPP2 is about what *will* be done. This effectively means that, although NEPP2 is shorter in its page-count, its presented strategy is actually better suited for direct use by the government. The PCSD was enacted as a federal advisory committee. Its recommendations (*Sustainable America*) were therefore formed outside of the regular governmental structure, and still had to be implemented by the American agencies.

As for advisory organs, it could be argued that the PCSD was more elaborate in tailoring of *Agenda 21* than the SER was. While both completed this task, it might be argued that the process in the US proved to be more sustainable, because the PCSD was comprised of such a varied group of delegates from society and was therefore more inclusive than the Dutch advisory report. The PCSD worked from the bottom-up, being comprised of different stakeholders, held public meetings, and were in close contact with the locals. The SER, which is also comprised of different stakeholders, is arguably less elaborate in its report. It is an organ tasked with advising on virtually everything, making it less representative for the case of sustainable development than the specifically created PCSD. Accordingly, the SER released 1 report and was not involved with the further implementation of their advice like the PCSD was.

This difference in elaborateness might be explained due to the more centralized nature of the Netherlands. Being a welfare-state, centralized governmental planning is expected. The SER is a well-established advisory organ for the Dutch government. It often advises on several topics, either by request or without. It is only logical that the SER also advised on this policy plan as well. Although the government is free to interpret these advises as they see fit, they regularly serve as a basis for policy direction. The PCSD was more related to the liberal background of the United States, which influences the way in which its citizens view the government and what the government can actually do. This is also unifiable with Clinton's remark about the passive role of the government (the government was neither the problem nor the solution). The government seems to be presented as the mediator between different stakeholders, the environment, and the economy

and is advised by the PCSD to stimulate the different sectors (i.e. stakeholders) in becoming sustainable themselves. Sustainable policymaking in the US was a bottom-up effort supported by the government, but not necessarily coordinated by it. In the Netherlands, it seems to be the other way around. Here, political institutions formed the strategy and implementation mainly on a governmental level, without much input from society.

The PCSD, therefore, seems to be more targeted towards the American citizens. Aside from focusing more on a shift in mentality than legislature, the final report of the PCSD seems to be a morally motivated call for change directly addressing the American people. The SER-report and NEPP2, on the other hand, are written by and for governmental institutions. While the NEPP's are accessible to the public, there is no real 'popular' version of the document aimed to involve the constituency.

Ultimately, this difference in elaborateness comes with a price. The SER formulated the report in less than a year, while it took the PCSD three years to come up with their advisory report. In terms of political efficacy, it could be said that the Dutch outperformed the United States in this area. Notwithstanding the head start the Dutch had in sustainable policymaking, the examined political frameworks also argue in favor of the Netherlands in terms of efficacy. This is interesting, because the PvsP-debate expects presidential administrations to be less-opposed in policymaking and therefore rather swift in policy-creation. However, these findings seem to suggest otherwise. The following section will try to explain this observation in more detail using the PvsP-variables.

6.2 – Analysis through the institutional variables

This section will analyze the observations of the preceding subchapter using the two variables presented in subchapter 2.2. To reiterate, these are the veto-player composition, which argues that the amount of political players who can change the status quo influences policy and regime stability, and the chain of delegation, which assesses policy efficacy through the routes of political delegation and accountability.

6.2.1 – The role of veto-players

According to Tsebelis, the Clinton administration looked like it had overcome a ‘deadlock’, and was able to swiftly move on with implementing legislation and policies.¹⁹⁰ Because congress was democratic, it could be expected that the United States would have been quick in finalizing a strategy on sustainable development. While the PCSD did fulfill their job, it is interesting to see that it took them three years to publicize the first report, and an additional three to fully conceptualize their strategy. This observation does not speak in favor of Tsebelis’ theory. However, in taking a different approach to Tsebelis’ theory, the veto-player composition might still be used to explain why the US (or: Clinton) took this route.

Firstly, the executive order to create the PCSD was implemented very fast because it required nothing besides direct orders from President Clinton. For the United States, Tsebelis argues that the President is the most important veto-player in changing policy.¹⁹¹ Because the president is a veto-power in his own right, he was able to quickly establish a council to aid his administration in sustainable policymaking. However, due to the fact that there was no readily established strategy (as was the case in the Netherlands), the PCSD had to start from scratch.

One of the major tasks of the PCSD was to identify the stakeholders and strategize sustainable development in relation to their interests. This is where we can see other veto-players. While these stakeholders were individuals, they represented large enterprises and/or interest groups. These stakeholders might be the veto-players whose interest had to be evaluated carefully in order to create durable policies; if one or more stakeholders would be negatively affected, veto-players from their sector might interfere with policymaking.¹⁹² Perhaps, then, the PCSD was not comprised of stakeholders, but rather of ‘veto-players’. In regarding the PCSD as a council of veto-players, Tsebelis’ argument holds up because this large amount of veto-players required careful planning and concessions in order to satisfy them all. Furthermore, Tsebelis’ argument that many veto-players can incentivize policymaking seems to be endorsed by this view of the PCSD.

¹⁹⁰ Tsebelis, ‘Decision making in political systems’, 310.

¹⁹¹ Ibidem.

¹⁹² Ibidem, 306 – 307.

For the case of the Netherlands, the roles of the veto-player are also identifiable. According to Tsebelis, the Netherlands had only one veto-player due to congruence between the First and Second Chambers.¹⁹³ This is affirmed by the case studies. NEPP and NEPP2 were drafted by different cabinets (both chaired by the same Prime Minister). These were majority cabinets in both chambers, leaving the government virtually uncontested in introducing new policies. The quick creation and implementation of both NEPP and NEPP2 is evidence of this increased efficacy due to a lack of veto-players. This lack of opposition did prove to make the NEPP2 less elaborate and encompassing than the PCSD's strategy.

According to Tsebelis, veto-players incentivize policymaking. Where did the political incentive to create sustainable policies come from in this veto-player lacking government? The answer lies with the overarching veto-player which perpetually influences the Dutch government: the European Union. As the SER and NEPP2 identified, its international strategy is largely influenced by the European community. Being a member state of the European Union entails compliance with EU policies and active participation in the European Community. Compliant with Tsebelis' argument, it seems that the European Union role as an extra veto-player incentivizes the creation of these policies rather than blocks them. However, they might also inhibit international aspirations of the Netherlands, seeing as they are more a cog in the machine rather than their own separate entity on an international level.

It is hard to determine the durability of these policies. For the United States, policy durability seems to be dependent on the political orientation of the Presidential Administration. Clinton's successor Bush Jr., for example, was not very active in the field of sustainability. Obama subsequently proved to be more sustainable (especially in terms of strengthening the community). The Trump administration, on the other hand, is pulling out of climate agreements and trade deals which were meant to foster sustainable development and is dividing the country increasingly.

In the Netherlands, shortly after the release of NEPP2 the cabinet came to the end of its term. The release of the following environmental policy plan (NEPP3) came only at the end of the following cabinet, and is a continuation of its predecessor (motivated by sustainable development).¹⁹⁴ As of the time of writing, the National Environmental Policy Plan still exists and

¹⁹³ Ibidem, 310.

¹⁹⁴ VROM, *Nationaal Milieubeleidsplan 3* (w.p. 1998) 13-15.

is only in its fourth alteration (in over 30 years). It could be said, then, that NEPP can be regarded as a durable policy basis.

Why, then, did the Dutch policymaking process, with less veto-players, ultimately lead to more durable policies than the US, which had more veto-players? This observation contradicts Tsebelis' theory of policy durability. The answer to this is explained by two reasons. The first of which, interestingly enough, uses Tsebelis' theory itself.

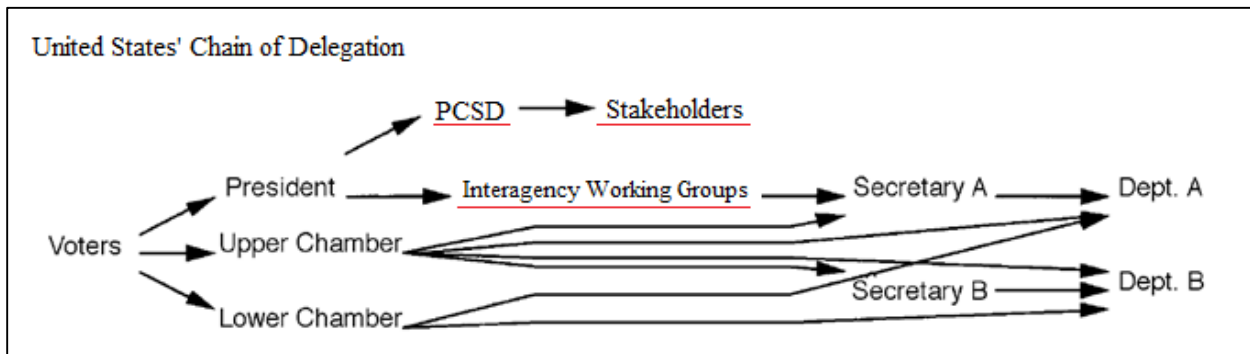
In the Dutch case, the veto-player influence came from both the government formation (poldermodel) and from the European Union. The European Union (and UN) exerts enough veto-power to force the Netherlands into the creation and maintenance of a sustainable environmental policy plan. Therefore, durable policies spawned through concessions in the cabinet's formation, and European (or; transnational) coercion. Although there were more veto-players involved in the US' case, the actual durability of these policies can be scrutinized. This can be explained because although the amount of involved veto-players connected to the PCSD ensured durable policies (exemplified by the PCSD's elaborateness), the policies themselves were implemented into the regular veto-player system. The veto-power of every Presidential Administration is strong enough to undo the work of the previous administration, thereby limiting the durability of the PCSD-policies to the Clinton administration. The second reason why the Dutch policies were ultimately more stable will be explored in the next section.

6.2.2 – The chains of delegation and accountability

Examining the chains of delegation in both systems might shed light on how these trajectories of implementation came to life. Firstly, for the United States, the chain of delegation theory by Strøm (see 2.2.2) can be used in explaining the examined policymaking process. Similarly to Tsebelis' veto-players, however, the theory does not apply as expected. Clinton established a whole new council to identify the stakeholders and create a sustainable development strategy. In doing so, the actual presidential chain of delegation was not set in motion. Rather, it created a new side-tracked chain, starting with the President. In this chain, the PCSD and its appointed members are delegated to create this centralized sustainable development strategy. It could be argued that these members are the 'heads' of their specific sector, and can therefore be held accountable for the recommended strategies of the PCSD. This newly created chain is more reminiscent of the parliamentary chain than the presidential one. The outcome of the PCSD's efforts were subsequently fed back to the

President (chain of accountability), who could thereafter introduce the findings into the regular presidential chain.

When the second report was released, the Interagency Working Groups on Sustainable Development were created by the President and led by Vice-president Al Gore. These working groups aided the agencies in crafting centralized policies to implement the recommendations of *Sustainable America*. Here, the presidential chain of delegation itself is expanded, because the actual implementation of the recommendations made in *Sustainable America* was not directly delegated to the heads of the agencies, but rather to these centralized working group. After the completion of the PCSD side-tracked chain, a new chain starts in which the President delegates the PCSD’s findings to the Interagency Working Groups. Once again, this chain is more reminiscent of a parliamentary chain because a centralized policy plan is introduced via an extra direct chain-link. This theory is visualized in the following figure, in which these extra steps are added to the presidential chain of delegation (indicated by the red lines):

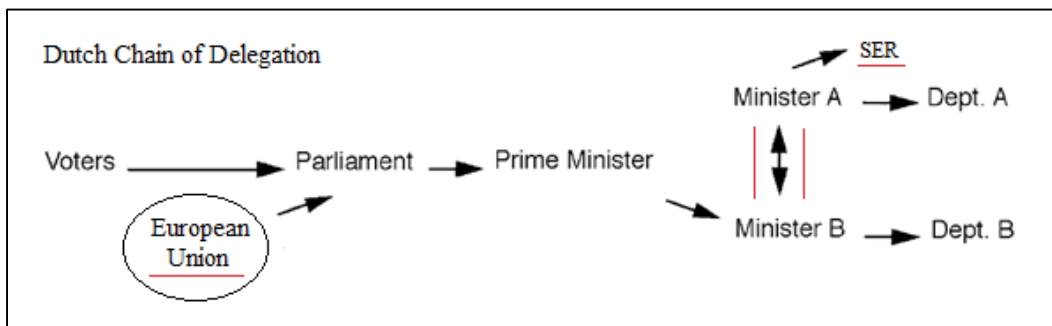


Altered version of Strøm's presidential chain of delegation

Furthermore, this renewed chain of delegation ties in with the presidential veto-power. Seeing that the PCSD had to repeatedly ask the president for a prolongation of the council. The President had to assess the value of the PCSD with each subsequent phase, and had to manually prolong the council’s existence. This can serve as an example of what Strøm means with an *ex post* assessment of accountability; the accountability of the council (i.e. the quality of their execution of the delegated task) was evaluated afterwards.

However, this does not mean that the original presidential chain (as drawn by Strøm) does not apply. Contrarily, this redrawn chain of delegation only showcases a temporary fix for this chain's shortcomings. After the PCSD and Interagency Working Groups had been dissolved, both the chains of delegation and accountability returned to their original form. This means that, when voters choose a new President and legislature, a change in policy has to follow the original chain of delegation again (unless alterations like the one above are made).

For the Dutch case, the chain of delegation is relatively simple and follows Strøm's parliamentary chain quite truthfully. NEPP and NEPP2 were the responsibility of the VROM-minister. Although the documents were signed by four additional ministers, this one minister was accountable for its contents and therefore bore the responsibility. However, two alterations can be made to fully chart the road to the creation of NEPP2 (and NEPP). Alterations to the chain are marked in red:



Altered version of Strøm's parliamentary chain of delegation

The first alteration is the advisory organ SER, which made an advisory report by request of the minister of VROM. This advisory report formed the basis for NEPP2, and should therefore be included in this chain. Furthermore, the ministers also worked together in the creation of NEPP2, visualized by the arrow linking the ministers. In this case, the chain of accountability is indeed the mirror image of the chain of delegation. In fact, the VROM-minister has to report back to the government with a new policy plan every four years (in the case of NEPP2 this was 1998). This is an example of one of the *ex-ante* accountability checks in place in the parliamentary system. It is part of the VROM-minister's job, and if this job is not performed satisfactory, the minister is held accountable and is usually expected or forced to resign (this was not the case with the NEPP's). Lastly, it should be remembered, however, that the European Union influences this chain from the

outside. The EU both incentivizes (or *delegates*) the Dutch parliament to create sustainable policies, but also holds it accountable.

Future iterations of this development cycle of a NEPP (e.g. NEPP3 and NEPP4) could (and still can) follow the same formula, because no alterations to the delegation and accountability chain have to be made to set the creation of such a plan in motion. Additionally, according to Strøm and backed by these alterations made to NEPP, new or updated versions can draw on the durable source material of their predecessors signifying political efficacy.¹⁹⁵

The largest difference between these two altered chains is the fact that the changes made to the parliamentary model are inherent to the Dutch model; they are permanent and therefore permanently available in the process of creating policy. The Dutch advisory organ (SER), for example, lies deep within the Dutch chain of delegation. Similarly, the ability for the ministries to coordinate their policies is nothing new. The alterations visible in the US chain, on the other hand, were added manually by President Clinton. He had to create a separate advisory organ to tailor *Agenda 21* to suit the United States' context, and subsequently create another entity (the Interagency Working Groups) to ensure a centralized implementation. While this can be repeated in the future, it is evident that it is a time-consuming endeavor. Additionally, when these extra institutions are dissolved, the chain of accountability differs from the chain of delegation from which the sustainable development policies spawned. This is the second reason why the US policies ultimately cannot be durable in the long run; agencies and departments are no longer held accountable for these policies after an ideological change in the Presidential Administration.

¹⁹⁵ Strøm, 'Delegation and accountability in parliamentary democracies', 285 – 286.

7 – Conclusion

This thesis aimed to contribute to the debate surrounding de pros and cons of either a presidential democracy or a parliamentary democracy (the PvsP-debate). The relatively long lifespan of this debate is significant of its increase in complexity and level of nuance over time. After identifying the three waves of this debate, two variables were distilled from the last wave. These are the ‘veto-player composition’ by George Tsebelis, and the ‘chain of delegation’ by Kaare Strøm. These variables were used because they are both relevant and applicable to policymaking in democratic systems. Because detailed case studies of these variables are relatively scarce, this thesis conducted two case studies in order to evaluate the applicability of these two variables in the context of sustainable development.

The analyzed cases were the United States and the Netherlands. These two countries were chosen due to their applicability as an example of both a presidential and parliamentary democracy respectively. For both of these countries, their implementation of the UN action-plan *Agenda 21* was examined in the light of their societal and political context. The differences in implementation between the two cases were subsequently explained through the scope of the two PvsP-variables.

7.1 – Findings

The research question set to find out why the United States had to employ a separate council (the PCSD) for the implementation of *Agenda 21*, in contrast to the Netherlands which did not need such an extra political institution. In comparing both cases in search for an answer, several findings surfaced.

The first of which is the fact that these nomothetic PvsP-variables were indeed applicable to these real-life cases, but had to be altered to fit their ideographic nature. Although they could not be carbon-copied and used, the general theories behind them can be affirmed with the results of this study. Veto-players could be identified and their role in the policymaking process fits the description given by Tsebelis. However, this research identified a role for external veto-players as well. These are the stakeholders in the United States (as identified by the PCSD), and the European Union in the Dutch case. In both cases, these players influenced the durability of policymaking in

accordance with Tsebelis' theory. Tsebelis' did not predict, however, that veto-players can also warrant the creation of a (temporary) new system for policymaking (as was the case in the US).

In assessing the chains of delegation, some interesting results were also found. While, for the Dutch case, the chain seems to be mostly synonymous with the chain presented by Strøm (with the exception of the two embedded additions and the external EU). The United States' case, on the other hand, yielded something completely different. It seems that with the creation of the PCSD and Interagency Working Groups, two parliamentary-styled chains were introduced in order to achieve policy congruence. However, these newly created chains were temporary and could not be used again in future iterations the policymaking process, unless a President creates them once again.

Tsebelis' veto-player analysis is a good way to identify the political players needed for policy change. The route, effectiveness and durability of this policy-change process can be assessed using Strøm's chains of delegation and accountability. Furthermore, these variables complement each other when used simultaneously. .

In taking a comparative-historical approach, ideographic insights have been gained through the use of these nomothetic variables. Ultimately, then, the prepositions of both variables seem to hold true. The United States might have taken a more sustainable approach in tailoring *Agenda 21* to fit their specific society than the Netherlands did. Furthermore, in employing the Interagency Working Groups the US ensured a centralized implementation of this strategy. However, this is a good example of an ideographic observation; this approach differs from the general expectations of the US' presidential structure. The Netherlands behaved as expected by these variables. Its coalition government ensured durability of NEPP and its successors, and the implementation of an alteration (NEPP2) was swift due to its majority government.

Finally, to answer the research question, the variables seem to explain that the United States had to take the 'parliamentary detour' of the PCSD and Interagency Working Groups in order to create a centralized sustainable development strategy, and, subsequently, achieve policy congruence. This is also the most important insight of this research; it seems that a presidential democracy can temporarily overcome its shortcomings by employing parliamentary tactics.

7.2 – Concluding remarks

While the results of this research are by no means nomothetic, they do show that a comparative-historical approach can yield significant insights about the way in which presidential and parliamentary democracies work. In applying the theories behind these broad variables on in-depth case studies, a better understanding of the differences between both regime types is obtained. Future research should therefore test more variables on a wider array of cases. For example, if the implementation of the current UN Sustainable Development Goals would be analyzed for both cases, a within-case comparison can be done assessing whether or not the findings of this thesis have nomothetic properties.

Additionally, more questions arise from the observation that the United States seemingly adopted a temporary parliamentary ‘chain of delegation’ in order to make strategizing their sustainable development policies inclusive and durable. If we combine this observation with the fact that presidential democracies tend to have shorter lifespans, and consider the fact that the United States are actually the oldest (presidential) representative democracy, it might be wondered if there are more examples of these ‘parliamentary detours’ (i.e. workarounds) which aid the relatively inflexible American political institutions. Further research could assess if this is indeed the case. If so, this theory of detours might be applicable to other presidential administrations. On the other side of the same coin resides the question whether or not parliamentary governments sometimes take ‘presidential detours’ to reap the benefits of those regimes.

In the context of sustainability, this research showed that the implementation of sustainable development policies (especially those recommended by *Agenda 21*) can differ vastly between two political regimes. Because *Agenda 21* was so broad in its recommendations, it had to be tailored to fit the countries’ specific contexts. Overlaying the PvsP-debate on top of sustainable development can yield significant insights for both topics. As was shown in this thesis, sustainable action-plans create global incentive for policymaking. This creates opportunities for more in-depth case studies like this one. An assessment of the governmental efforts needed to implement sustainable policy can furthermore contribute to the discourse surrounding sustainable development and the actions needed to integrate it more effectively on a global sphere.

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