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The multi-level integration of policies : linear or circular movement ?

Most of the time integration is considered either as an horizontal (for instance internal or external integration among departements of a government) or as a vertical process (between different institutional levels). Integration is described as a linear movement that stems from the mutual ajustement of the closest actors: the European level interacts with the national level while the national government interacts in its turn with the regional one and so on. Even the theoretical controversies on "europeanization" are divided among ascendant or descendant integration processes' thesis. But instead of speaking about the integration by the top or the bottom, the *supra* or the *infra*, we would like to present another insight of integration process, i.e. the *sub-national* process of integration or how the national level can be bypassed with direct relations between the European commission and for instance some regional small-scaled environmental organizations. In that sense, we may witness a more circular integration from the sub- to the supra- provoking a chain reaction on national levels.

Based on a thorough Ph D research, this qualitative survey draws the situation of two European countries (France and the Netherlands) facing difficulties of "Nitrate" Directive implementation, which in both countries resulted in the hardening of national legislation. These national or sub-national organizations as EC new channels of monitoring and informations played a major role in the setting up of an agricultural model more respectful of the environmental requirements. This European national agricultural policies coordination goal follows the unexpected path of coercion (judicial procedures) while we were thinking at a more cooperative pattern. Thus we will also discuss the advantages and drawbacks of such a way to integrate European policy.