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## **Policy Integration for Sustainable Development: What does it mean and how can we analyse it?**

*- Work in progress -*

### *Abstract*

The reasoning of the paper is based on the identification of conceptual shortcomings regarding the meaning of policy integration (PI) within the discussion on governance for sustainable development (GSD). Although PI is claimed to be a core element of GSD, the theoretical linkages between the idea of sustainable development (SD) and PI remain rather vague and loose. These conceptual deficiencies are related to the particular interpretation of PI within the specific context of GSD. The discussion still lacks an adequate and analytically well elaborated notion of *PI for sustainable development* that has its theoretical and normative foundations in the idea of SD itself.

The article aims at closing these conceptual gaps by clarifying the relationship between PI and SD. It takes its starting point in the assumption that the political idea of SD is at its core itself an integrative idea that requires a specific mode of sectorally, socially, spatially and temporally integrative policy making. Therefore, SD policies have to be conceptualised, analysed and evaluated as multi-dimensional integrative policies. It is further argued that the common paradigm of environmental policy integration (EPI) does not represent an adequate conceptual basis to analyse PI in the context of SD, for EPI is rooted in the idea of ecological modernisation but not in the SD discourse. Based on a critical literature review an alternative notion of PI will be proposed and transferred into an analytical framework that focuses on structural, functional and procedural conditions of PI within and across the dimensions of time, space, actors and sectors. Adapted to specific institutional settings, this framework could be used for in-depth empirical analyses of efforts towards integrative policy-making for SD (e.g. national long-term strategies for SD).

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# 1 Introduction

Within the last 20 years the idea of sustainable development (SD) has without a doubt become one of the most dominant and influential political discourses. However, the discussion on the idea's political implications has not come to an end yet. Whereas the earlier debate was mainly about SD's substantial requirements (e.g. goals, instruments), the recent discussion is more concerned with the institutional and procedural conditions of governance for SD (Minsch/Feindt/Meister *et al.* 1998). It is now a conventional wisdom that transformations towards sustainability are not confined to superficial adaptations of politics and policies, but call for deeper institutional transformations of the society as a whole and the political system in particular.<sup>1</sup>

According to a common line of argument, the challenges of sustainable development cannot be managed within the established fragmented policy making system producing largely uncoordinated policies. In fact, SD implies the integrated treatment of complex problems as well as the balancing of economic, ecologic and social dimensions. This dysfunction of the established problem solving mechanisms with respect to the requirements of SD could be overcome by policy integration (PI).<sup>2</sup>

Upon initial observation, there seems to be a renaissance of the older concept of PI within the newer discussion on SD. However, a closer look at the debate reveals that this new conceptual alliance seems to be hardly more than rhetorical. There are numerous political and scientific contributions that emphasise the necessity of integrative policy making for sustainable development. Nevertheless, these pleas remain normatively and analytically rather underspecified. The particular meaning of PI in the context of governance for SD still remains unclear and vague. The question of how to conceptualise and analyse PI for SD has rarely been addressed and systematically elaborated. For these reasons Lafferty *et al.* (2004: 13) have also noted that “[...] the notion of policy integration for sustainable development has clearly not been adequately developed”.<sup>3</sup>

Against this backdrop, this paper aims to clarify the notion of policy integration for sustainable development (PI for SD). The central questions are: What could be an adequate understanding of PI in the light of the SD idea? How can we think about policy integration in the context of SD? How do we have to conceptualise and operationalise PI for SD? The principal objective is to sketch out the contours of a conceptual framework that may serve evaluative as well as prescriptive purposes.

The argumentation will proceed in four steps. Within the first and second parts, I will outline the basic theoretical and normative reference points of PI for SD by exploring the notions of integra-

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Minsch/Feindt/Meister *et al.* (1998), Minsch (1997), Elzen/Geels/Green (2004), Zilleßen (1998), Pfister (1998), Brand (2002), Connor/Dovers (2004), Göll/Thio (2004: 12pp.).

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Briassoulis (2004: 3), Schnurr/Holtz (1998), Wijkman (1999), Liberatore (1997), Lenschow (2002), Connor/Dovers (2004: 216pp.).

<sup>3</sup> These conceptual shortcomings are reproduced within empirical studies on GSD. Most of the research on SD politics deals with PI rather superficially. For example, it is assumed that the mere existence of sustainable development strategies in conjunction with specific institutional settings is *eo ipso* accompanied by the integration of policies (Göll/Thio 2004, Swanson/Pintér/Bregha *et al.* 2004).

tion (2.) and reconstructing the integrative core of sustainable development (3.). These conceptual clarifications serve to (re-)frame the concept of PI for the context of SD. The fourth chapter provides an overview of the discussion on PI examining the concept's general meaning and sketching out some analytical distinctions. Taking account of these conceptual remarks, the fifth part elaborates on the particular relationship between PI and SD. This is done in three steps. First, some general considerations on the relation between SD and PI will be made. Second, taking a critical look at environmental policy integration (EPI), the deficiencies of this established conception of PI for SD will be revealed. Third, referring to the preceding conceptual remarks, the contours of an alternative conception of PI for SD will be developed.

## 2 Integration

### 2.1 Basic meaning

Like many other social scientific concepts, integration does not have a universally fixed and agreed-upon meaning (Bergmann 1995: 213). The notion is used in different disciplines and within different theoretical contexts (Nohlen 1995: 278). Already the non scientific usage of the word reveals a variety of different semantics. Integration may imply unity, balance, coherency, stability, order, consensus, absence of conflict and contradictions (Lange/Schimank 2004: 11).<sup>4</sup> Accordingly, integration appears to be something desirable: the more of it, the better. However, this “cryptonormativity” disguises integration as an analytical concept and as an empirical phenomenon. Although there is no single definition of integration, it could, nevertheless, be illumining to ask for the core of concept in order to guide the search for a range of different meanings. This search for conceptual unity may sharpen the mind's awareness for differences.

According to Regenbogen/Meyer (1998), integration can be defined as restitution, completion, renewal as well as the process leading to the establishment or reestablishment of an integral whole, the unification of parts. Referring to Herbert Spencer, it is further argued that integration is a form of aggregation: the encounter and amalgamation of formerly dispersed parts resulting in an increased perceptivity of the integral whole and, at the same time, a diminished movability of the parts themselves. Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary defines integration as “[...] to form, coordinate, or blend into a functioning or unified whole; to unite with something else; to incorporate into a larger unit” (cit. in Persson 2003: 10). According to Nohlen, integration means the formation or production of a unity or wholeness out of separated elements, as well as the ability of that unity or wholeness to maintain the cohesion of single parts on the basis of shared values and norms (Nohlen 1995: 278).

A closer look at these definitions reveals that they are all based upon the same three elements: a non-integrated *initial state*, an integrated *final state* and an *integration process*. Accordingly, integration appears both, as a state and a process. Referring to “ability”, Nohlen's definition explicitly

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<sup>4</sup> This variety is made even more apparent by several opposing concepts such as differentiation, disintegration, fragmentation, segregation, assimilation, cooperation, conflict.

points to a functional dimension of integration. However, with regard to the concrete shape of the elements, the definitions open up a range of interpretations. In the initial state there could be dispersed or single parts or elements. The integration process is described as aggregation, coordination, mixing-up, unification, incorporation, etc.<sup>5</sup> The final state is characterised as wholeness, unity, unified whole, or, less specifically, some larger unit.<sup>6</sup> Despite this range of interpretations we have to keep in mind that integration does make a difference: The integrated final state differs from the non-integrated initial state with respect to both, the relation among the parts themselves and the relation between the parts and the whole. According to Spencer, this structural change results in a decreased movability of the parts and, as a consequence, in an increased perceptibility of the whole. Against this backdrop, it becomes clear that integration is a gradual phenomenon.

## 2.2 Analytical differentiations: modes of integration

Following these interpretations, integration can be conceptualised as a process or a state of the amalgamation of separated parts. By this process the movability of the parts is diminished, and, at the same time, the recognisability of the whole is enhanced in relation to that of its components. However, with regard to the initial state, the process, and the end state, there is a variety of different meanings. Subsequently, I will suggest some basic analytical categories to structure this plurality of meanings. The categories do not relate to the *objects* of integration (“*what* is being integrated?”) but rather to the *mode* of integration (“*how* are things being integrated?”).

### 2.2.1 Particularism vs. uniformity: partial vs. total integration

This differentiation serves to describe the final state of an integration process. Basically, there are two alternative scenarios. First, if we still can identify single parts within the final state of an integration process we can talk of a partial integration. Second, as soon as the previously separated parts have been incorporated into a unified whole and, as a result, are no longer recognizable at all we call it total integration. In a state of total integration the parts are no longer movable and, therefore, no longer perceivable as parts at all. In contrast, a particularistic final state is characterised by still movable and perceivable single parts.<sup>7</sup>

### 2.2.2 Hegemony vs. Reciprocity: unidirectional vs. mutual integration

This distinction relates to the direction of the integration process. Assuming that integration limits the integrated parts’ ability to move, the question arises whether the movability of all parts is constrained equally. Unidirectional integration means that one part is unilaterally constraining the

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<sup>5</sup> These different processes may imply different types of structural change that entail transformations concerning the order and relationship of the initial elements. For example, whereas aggregation refers to a merely unspecific merging of parts, coordination implies the ability of parts to mutually adapt and to orderly relate to each other.

<sup>6</sup> Again, the definitions open up a range of different interpretations. It is conceivable, for instance, that we both could or could not identify originally separated parts within the final state.

<sup>7</sup> This distinction should not reveal that integration has to be conceptualised as a gradual phenomenon. However, the bipolarity underscores that integration does not unavoidably entail the unification of parts and the dissolution of their identities.

movability of the other part(s). As a consequence, this part's perceptibility is increased at the expense of the other parts'. Thereby the integral whole adopts the shape of a single (or a few single) parts. Integration appears as a one-sided, hegemonic activity. Contrary to this, the mode of reciprocal integration is characterised by the establishment of mutual relations between the parts. Accordingly, the parts' movability is limited reciprocally.

### 2.2.3 *Balance vs. prioritisation: symmetric vs. asymmetric integration*

The differentiation between symmetric and asymmetric forms of integration refers to the arrangement of integrated parts within the final state. As soon as one integrated part dominates the end state structurally, functionally or substantially, we can talk of asymmetric (hierarchical) integration. By contrast, a symmetric form of integration is characterised by the absence of such dominance: all parts appear as equal. This distinction contains the critical point that integration entails neither a state of equal ranking and balance nor a state of prioritisation *by definition*. The particular arrangement of the parts is either a normative or an empirical question.

### 2.2.4 *Conservative vs. transformative integration*

The last category refers to the integrated parts' shape within the final state compared to the initial state. We can conceive of a conservative mode of integration according to which the parts in the initial state are identical to the parts in the end state. Alternatively, we can think of transformative integration processes by which the shapes of the integrated parts themselves are changed and we do not recognise the initial parts in the final state any longer.<sup>8</sup>

The previous conceptual remarks should have made clear that, although integration is an umbrella term covering a range of very different conceptions, there can also be identified an abstract conceptual core. Integration appears as a process, state or function and can be described referring to a non-integrated initial state, an integration process and an integrated end-state. Although integration can adopt different forms and produce various results it, nevertheless, goes hand in hand with a diminished movability of the single integrated parts and an increased perceptibility of the integral whole. The suggested differentiations may serve to grasp various empirical phenomena and normative understandings of integration. They illustrate once again that there is no single notion of integration. Instead, integration is a concept that has to be specified with regard to different contexts and purposes. Therefore, statements about the mode of integration processes as well as the structure of an integrated end state can not be derived from the concept itself. In order to avoid a cryptonormative usage of the concept, propositions have to be derived *explicitly* from normative assumptions or empirical observations.

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<sup>8</sup> Obviously, the mode of total integration is at the same time transformative. Therefore, the distinction conservative vs. transformative refers only to partial forms of integration.

### 3 Sustainable Development as an integrative idea

Having examined the concept of integration, we now turn to the idea of SD. My assumption is that an adequate notion of PI for SD should be linked theoretically to the SD idea itself. Therefore, I will attempt to derive requirements concerning PI by re-interpreting SD in terms of integration. In what sense can SD be conceived as an integrative idea?

#### 3.1 SD as a contested concept

Interpreting the SD idea in terms of integration, we face the problem of a broad and somewhat chaotic discourse. Although there are some basic normative core elements as well as a specific discursive structure differing from other environmental discourses<sup>9</sup> there is no unambiguous definition of SD. Instead, SD appears as a contested concept (Holland 2000, Jacobs 1999). Contested concepts are characterised by two levels of meaning. The first level comprises a short and very abstract definition sketching out the concept's normative frame and goals. Although these definitions can be manifold, their basic meaning and core statements remain widely uncontested and generally accepted (Jacobs 1999: 25). The contestation appears on the second level of meaning and refers to concrete conceptions for implementing the concept (e.g. goals, strategies, measures, etc.): "Almost everyone is in favour of democracy, liberty, [...] social justice; the *debate* is over alternative *conceptions* of what they mean, at the second level" (ibid.).

But what follows from this contestedness for the analysis of SD's integrative core? In the remainder of the chapter, the dual and contested structure of SD is taken as given and both levels of meaning are scrutinised independently with respect to integration. Before that, I will make some short remarks on the evolution of SD to yield a better understanding of its specific structure and discursive identity.

#### 3.2 SD as integrative discourse

The idea of SD did not evolve in a historical vacuum. Moreover, its emergence can be interpreted as a process of discursive integration in which formerly separated discourses on environment and development have merged into a new discourse (Stickler/Eblinghaus 1996: 17). Accordingly, SD was not an invention in the proper meaning of the word (Grober 2002, McNeill 2000); the new thing about SD is the linkage and unification of previously unconnected normative values and positive symbols (Dryzek 1997). However, this discursive integration cannot sufficiently be explained by contingent historical processes. To a considerable extent, it is the result of political bargaining

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<sup>9</sup> Dryzek explicitly discusses SD in relation to other environmental discourses. Nevertheless, with respect to its more comprehensive set of normative reference points, SD appears to be wider than other environmental discourses (Carter 2001: 198). Unlike other environmental discourses, SD draws its specific discursive identity from the reframing of the relationship between nature conservation, economic development and social justice (Arts 1994).

and compromises.<sup>10</sup> It was the Brundtland-Commission that finalized the discursive integration process that had been emerging since the early 1970s.<sup>11</sup> The commission's work was characterised by the balancing of conflicting interests and the search for compromise (Mitcham 1995: 317). Finally, the notion of sustainable development was created as a formal compromise constructing win-win-scenarios between environmental and economic interests as well as between the industrial and development countries.<sup>12</sup> Hence, SD is not just the result of a discursive integration *process*. At the same time it *functions* as an integrative discourse that transcends and reframes established differences and conflicts in addition to creating new discourse coalitions (Hajer 1995)<sup>13</sup>

This discursive integration serves as a background condition of politics for SD constituting a new symbolic and argumentative repertoire for political communication and a new "institutional software".<sup>14</sup> It shifts established patterns of problem perception and sets of values, brings up new actor constellations and new cleavages for conflict (Brand 1997: 9). Old patterns of argumentation and story lines are delegitimised and replaced by new ones. The new discourse integrates by semantics: it (re-)defines opportunities for and, at the same time, limits the freedom of political communication (Hellmann 2004: 196).

### 3.3 Integrative structure of the idea

We now turn to the "end state" of this discursive integration process: the idea of SD itself. Asking "what is sustainability?" one might mainly get answers emphasising the normative character of the idea. Without a doubt, the debate on SD refers first and foremost to values and goals. However, the following argumentation is based on the assumption that the idea is not restricted to a normative dimension, but also stands for a particular perception of reality. Hence, SD comprises not only statements about a desirable state of the world being expressed in a comprehensive set of values and goals, but also an analysis of real-world phenomena (Brand/Jochum 2000: 13). Following this interpretation, SD appears as more than just a new political value. SD functions as a reality constructing discourse that frames socio-ecological problems in a particular way. By linking elements of problem analysis with those referring to problem-solving, SD stands for a comprehensive diagnostic and therapeutical programme.

The following analysis reveals patterns of integration – understood in a broad sense as „relating

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<sup>10</sup> Meadowcroft states that "[s]ustainable development was [...] *explicitly* formulated as a 'bridging' concept – as an idea that could draw together apparently distinct policy domains, and unite very different interests behind a common agenda" (Meadowcroft 2000: 371, my emphasises).

<sup>11</sup> The Brundtland report (BR) may be regarded as *the* decisive contribution producing a single discourse out of the environmental and development discourses (Stickler/Eblinghaus 1996: 36)

<sup>12</sup> Lélé describes SD as a "‘metafix’ that will unite everybody from the profit-minded industrialist and risk-minimizing subsistence farmer to the equity-seeking social worker, the pollution-concerned or wildlife-loving First Worlder, the growth-maximizing policy maker, the goal-oriented bureaucrat, and therefore, the vote-counting politician" (Lélé 1991: 613).

<sup>13</sup> „Not long ago, environmental policy and politics was a battlefield not just for sharply conflicting interests and world-views – from radical greens through technocentric environmentalists to capitalists defending economic growth – but correspondingly for competing vocabularies. Yet today nearly all of these groups are using the same language and endorsing the same nominal objective, that of sustainable development" (Jacobs 1999: 22).

<sup>14</sup> Regarding the potential impact of discourses cf. Dryzek (1997: 5, 18fp.).

parts“ – within these two dimensions. SD is based on an integrative system of values and goals as well as an integrative perception of the world’s socio-ecological problems. This analysis of SD’s (uncontested) integrative core refers mainly to the BR for this document clearly takes a central position within the SD discourse as a whole.<sup>15</sup>

### 3.3.1 *Integrative system of values and goals*

In the first place SD represents a normative political idea comprising statements about a desirable direction of human development. It can be characterised as an anthropocentric idea with a global scope and a universal aspiration of validity (Dobson 1998: 218). The new thing about SD is the systematic coupling of various normative claims and goals as expressed by the comprehensive goal systems we find in the BR as well as in the Agenda 21 (DiGiulio 2004: 49, 108). The satisfaction of the needs of all human beings in the present and future may be regarded as overriding normative principle of SD (DiGiulio 2004: 49). On a second layer this rather abstract principle is converted into more concrete area-specific goals relating to environmental, economic, and social spheres (ibid: 50pp.).<sup>16</sup>

But not only relating and merging various previously separated objectives renders SD an integrative idea. Moreover, the basic normative-ethical concept itself is structured in a specific integrative way. The normative core of the idea consists of two basic value judgements (Ott/Döring 2004: 30): first, responsibility for future generations (diachronic solidarity), and, second, the closure of the gap between the poor and the rich (synchronic solidarity). Both value judgements are interlinked. Together they imply a temporally and spatially comprehensive concept of distributive justice, as expressed in the prominent and much cited Brundtland definition of SD:

“Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” (WCED 1987: 43)

Accordingly, SD aims at a just distribution<sup>17</sup> of essential goods based on the principle of “needs” within one and among different generations. Of particular relevance is the tight relationship between the capabilities of present and future generations to satisfy their respective needs. The word “without” indicates, that a particular pathway of societal development is actually not sustainable when it infringes one of the two value judgments. Development may be qualified as sustainable only as soon as it contributes to both, inter-generational and intra-generational justice *at once*. It is particularly this requirement of simultaneousness that characterises the normative core of the SD

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<sup>15</sup> Its publication did not only initialise a broad scientific debate on SD (Aguirre 2002). The report also represents the central conceptual and substantial reference point of a myriad of political and scientific SD conceptions. According to Dingler (2003), the BR still counts as *the* paradigmatic text within the hegemonic SD discourse, because it framed the fundamental problems, analytical approaches and solutions. It constitutes the “discursive fundament” and works as the main attractor structuring the further discussion on SD (Dingler 2003: 221).

<sup>16</sup> To a great extent, the BR imputes functional relationships between these goals assuming that the pursuit of one goal simultaneously increases the likelihood of reaching another goal (DiGiulio 2004: 55). The report’s prominent thesis according to which economic development does not only alleviate poverty, but, at the same time, supports environmental protection – which itself is a precondition for economic development –, has become paradigmatic for this assumption.

<sup>17</sup> For an in-depth discussion on the relationship between SD and justice cf. Dobson (1998).



idea. From the above follows that present generation's development has to be assessed in the light of its potential impacts on future generations' development and vice versa. As a consequence, present and future generations' opportunities for development mutually limit each other – they are reciprocally integrated. But development pathways are not only integrated with respect to a temporal dimension, but also in a spatial manner. As Lafferty and Langhelle emphasise „sustainable development is linked to both the relationship between generations and to that within our own generation, on a *national* and *global* basis” (1999: 3, my emphasises). This differentiation implies the reciprocal integration of different spatial layers. Hence, a development pathway contributing to a just distribution on the local level may not be called sustainable when it contradicts the principle of global justice. As well, a development pathway that furthers global distributive justice is not sustainable if it goes at cost of a just distribution at the national level.

More generally, the normative core of SD can be described as an integrative ethical principle linking different time horizons as well as multiple spatial layers. SD requires the local being related to the global as well as the present being related to the future. This implies limitations regarding the movability of developmental pathways. Because actions directed to the development here and now may have impacts on the development there and tomorrow and vice versa, both the potential impacts in the here and now as well as those there and tomorrow have to become premises for decisions to act. Against this backdrop SD appears as *integrated development* that is, a development whose movability is limited with respect to its potential spatial and temporal effects. In sum, SD appears as an integrative formula for a comprehensive system of mutually related values and goals of different societal areas. The idea's normative core consists of a comprehensive conception of distributive justice integrating different time horizons and spatial layers.

### 3.3.2 *Integrative world view*

SD is not just a normative idea, but stands for a particular perception of social-ecological reality. Discursively constructing the world, SD enfolds a specific diagnosis of its crisis. The discursive frame consists of assumptions about basic items in the physical world as well as of assumptions about natural relationships.<sup>18</sup> One basic building block of SD's reality construction are “nested systems“. These are spatially encompassing structures „ranging from the global to the local” (Dryzek 1997: 129). However, the motif of “nestedness” is not restricted to spatial interdependencies, but refers to interconnections between different (material or immaterial) societal and ecological spheres.<sup>19</sup> The motif of nestedness serves as a central conceptual frame for the diagnosis of the world's problems. These do no longer appear as spatially limited and restricted to social, ecological or economic spheres, but as comprehensive, spatially and sectorally intertwined problem complexes. According to the BR

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<sup>18</sup> These are two out of four “questions to ask about discourses” introduced by Dryzek (1997: 16) to analyse and compare the symbolic structure of environmental discourses. The elements within these categories represent the construction material of the discursive story lines.

<sup>19</sup> „The environment does not exist as a sphere separate from human ambitions, actions, and needs ... the ‘environment’ is where we all live” (WCED 1987: xi).

“[w]e are now forced to concern ourselves with the impacts of *ecological stress* – degradation of soils, water regimes, atmosphere and forests – upon our *economic prospects*. We have in the more recent past been forced to face up to a sharp increase in economic interdependence among nations. We are now forced to accustom ourselves to an accelerating ecological interdependence among nations. Ecology and economy are becoming even more interwoven – locally, regionally, nationally and globally – into a seamless net of causes and effects.” (WCED 1987: 5, my emphasises)<sup>20</sup>

Although the BR has been criticised much for its diagnostic reductionism (Lélé 1991), the general pattern of nestedness has become a basic motif of the whole SD discourse rendering inadequate any selective approaches to problem analysis and solving. BR has brought up not only environmental problems, but spatially and sectorally intertwined social-ecological problem complexes.

Besides nested systems, “limits” constitute a second basic entity within the SD discourse’s construction of social-ecological reality (cf. Dryzek 1997: 129pp.). The motif of limits refers to boundaries between states of sustainability and unsustainability. It is assumed that beyond certain (physical or immaterial) boundaries sustainable development is no longer possible since the conditions for development are not given in the long run. Therefore, it is a necessary condition for SD to stay within these boundaries. Limits imply that the “movability” of societal development is confined to a certain finite space. Thus limits represent integrative factors.

After all, SD appears as a multidimensional idea that reframes the fields of environment and development with respect to integration. In cognitive-conceptual terms the reframing points to the global-local shape of problems, the interconnection of ecological, social, and economic conditions as well as the potential finiteness of societal development. The normative reframing refers to the mutual relation of various values and goals as well as to the establishment of a spatially and temporally integrative ethical principle.

### 3.4 Integration controversies

We now turn to the second (contested) level of meaning. Here we can observe a considerable variety of SD conceptions. The attempt to grasp the discourse’s inner structure is complicated not only by the field’s own heterogeneity, but by an increasing amount of approaches attempting to systematize the field.<sup>21</sup> However, of particular prominence is the distinction between ecological and

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<sup>20</sup> This specific construction of interdependencies also forms the conceptual background against which the BR creates win-win-scenarios between various goals (Dryzek 1997: 130). Exemplary for this view on problems are the BR’s remarks on the linkages between poverty, economic development and environmental degradation: In her critical review on SD Lélé describes this issue as follows: „The basic premise of SD is that poverty is largely responsible for environmental degradation. Therefore, removal of poverty (i.e., development) is necessary for environmental sustainability. This, it is argued, implies that economic growth is absolutely necessary for SD. The only thing that needs to be done is to change the quality of this growth” (Lélé 1991: 614).

<sup>21</sup> With respect to their origins, Mebratu identifies “Institutional Versions”, “Ideological Versions” and “Academic Versions” of SD (1998: 504). Palmer/Cooper/van der Vorst (1998) sort the field of political SD conceptions by referring to their respective “commitment” to core elements of SD (“Futurity”, “Environment”, “Public Participation”, “Equity”). According to Stickler/Eblinghaus (1996) SD conceptions can be arranged on a spectrum between “technocentric” and “ecocentric” ideal types. In a similar approach Pearce (1996) identifies ecocentric and anthropocentric SD concepts as ideal types. Dobson (1998) differs between three basic conceptions of SD. From a discourse theoretic perspective Dingler recognises a hegemonic and various marginalised discourses (Dingler 2003). Tremmel (2003) differs between “political” and “scientific” conceptions. Arts (1994) reconstructs four strands of the SD discourse: “Business as usual”, “Green Economy”, “Integral Sustainability” and “Anti-modernism”. Jacobs (1999) refers to “radical” and “conservative” conceptions of sustainable development.

socio-ecological positions (Mazouz 2003: 239). Although both positions are based on conceptions framing SD in terms of areas, dimensions, pillars or columns, they differ with respect to both the relative weight of single areas and the relationship among the areas. Whereas ecological conceptions are devoted to the conservation of nature and, therefore, prioritise the ecological dimension, socio-ecological conceptions aim at balancing the different areas.

The economic controversy between weak and strong sustainability refers to the structure of a “fair bequest package” for future generations (Neumayer 1999, Pearce/Atkinson 1998, Steurer 2001). Assuming that the bequest package consists of different (natural, economic, cultural, etc.) capital stocks, the debate is about whether and to what extent substitutions between these capital stocks are acceptable and possible.

Elsewhere I have examined these conceptions with regard to their underlying understanding of integration. Due to the limited space this cannot be redone here. However, the main result has been that these conceptions entail different notions of integration. Strong sustainability, for instance, goes hand in hand with a concept of partial integration, whereas weak sustainability frames integration in terms of unification. Conceptions of ecological sustainability are based on an asymmetric notion of integration and balancing conceptions imply symmetric integration. Hence, it can be shown that different SD conceptions imply different meanings of integration. Assuming that the respective notion of integration also frames the *political* integration task and, consequently, the basic understanding of PI, it becomes clear that there is no unequivocal answer to the question of how to think about PI in the context of SD. The assumption of a „straight-forward-relationship” between SD and PI has to be refused with respect to SD’s conceptual diversity and contestedness. Given the aim of finding an adequate notion of PI for SD – how can we cope with this problem? There are at least two ways. First, we could make up a reasoned decision for a particular SD conception and, consequently, for a particular notion of integration. Second, we could avoid a decision and, instead, accept diversity and contestedness as essential properties of the SD discourse. Following the latter path of “non-decision”, contestedness itself becomes a starting point for thinking about a conception of PI for SD. Contestedness points to the political dimension of the idea, to the ambivalence of values and goals, to the ambiguity of worldviews and problem constructions as well as to its inherent dynamic and particularism. These characteristics imply that SD is not a universally definable state, but a continuing process of change that calls for a persistent adaptation of its normative and cognitive presumptions. Therefore, the contestedness on the 2<sup>nd</sup> level works as a corrective to the universal appeal of the idea’s normative and causal claims on the 1<sup>st</sup> level. Although these claims are not principally called into question they are complemented by the assumptions of ambivalence, ambiguity and uncertainty.<sup>22</sup>

### **3.5 Political implications**

Finally, I would like to sketch out some very basic implications concerning integrative politics for

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<sup>22</sup> One could say that contestedness works as a disintegrative moment by increasing the movability of options concerning SD, and, thus, becomes itself a requirement for re-integration.

SD that will be further specified in the next chapters. I start with some functional remarks on politics for SD and then refer again to the integrative structure of SD.

First, SD is a comprehensive idea of socio-ecological development pointing to the spatial, temporal as well as the sectoral interconnectedness of modern crisis phenomena (Brand 1997: 10). Against this backdrop governance for SD appears as a complex inter-temporal, inter-spatial, and inter-systemic ordering task: It is about ordering the relationship between present and future generations, within and between national societies, between different societal areas as well as between society and its natural environment. Second, SD relates “limitation” and “movability” as well as “conservation” and “change” constructing a simultaneousness of dynamism and stability: dynamic stability and stable dynamism (Meadowcroft 2000: 372). Politics for SD has to maintain and balance these tensions in order to achieve “ultra-stability” which means neither deadlock nor conservation, but *dynamism and change within a frame* (Renn 2001: 212). Accordingly (and thirdly), SD means integrated development. SD represents an integrative frame limiting the movability of pathways for societal development with respect to the dimensions of time and space.<sup>23</sup> Together they imply the reciprocal limitation of different societies’ developmental pathways in order to allow for sustainable development here and world wide as well as now and forever.

The SD idea’s integrative structure implies political integration efforts with regard to various dimensions. The *integrative system of values* implies that politics for SD do not pursue separated goals and an optimisation of developmental pathways of isolated societal and ecological spheres. Instead it requires the synoptic consideration and simultaneous realisation of various goals. The simultaneousness of inter- and intra-generational justice implies the linkage of short-term and long-term development perspectives. Therefore integrative politics for SD have to be based on comprehensive and integrated decision premises. The *integrative worldview* sensitises for potential interdependencies between different spatial layers as well as between different societal and ecological function areas. Accordingly, politics for SD has to provide capacities for analysing and solving comprehensive and interdependent problem complexes. Out of this we can derive analytical integration requirements regarding the temporal, spatial, and sectoral dimensions of problems.<sup>24</sup> Finally, the *conceptual contestedness*, the ambivalence of values and goals concerning SD, the ambiguity of problem perceptions, the idea’s inherent dynamic as well as the uncertainty of knowledge may be interpreted as integrative challenges to the political system. Accordingly, politics for SD

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<sup>23</sup> Within the time dimension limitations arise from the normative requirement of inter-temporal justice in connection with the motif of finiteness (“limits”). In order to maintain future generations’ opportunities to develop, the present generations’ own freedom for development has to be confined to certain limits and vice versa. Limitations with respect to the dimension of space emerge from the motif of spatial interdependencies in connection with the normative principle of international justice.

<sup>24</sup> With respect to the temporal dimension the analysis and solution of problems has to be based on a comprehensive time frame that integrates short-term and long-term horizons and relates the potential temporal externalities of political decisions to certain limits to development. Within the dimension of space, politics for SD has to consider different scales and spatial reference points from the local to the global in order to grasp spatial interdependencies and to control them within and by multi-level arrangements refer to cause-effect relationships within and across various layers. The requirement for sectoral integration refers to the analysis of mutual functional interdependencies between different societal sectors and environmental spheres in order to consider them within political decisions.

cannot be based on universally fixed and stable reference points. It is, moreover, about the mutual relating of different values, goals and problem perceptions in order to build a collectively binding understanding of SD. Integrative politics in this sense has to integrate (which means to limit) the conceptual and substantial openness of SD itself.

## 4 Policy Integration

Having sketched out some basic requirements to political integration resulting from SD, we now turn to the second part of the conceptual clarification: the concept of policy integration (PI). This chapter gives a brief overview of the general idea of PI. After clarifying why claims for PI arise it is examined what PI actually means. The chapter concludes with some remarks on shortcomings of the prevailing discussion on PI.

### 4.1 Diagnosis: Fragmentation of Policy Making System

The concept of PI has a long tradition. It appears in political as well as in scientific contexts where it is mostly used in a normative-prescriptive sense. Far more seldom, PI is applied as an empirical-analytic approach to describe and to explain real-world phenomena. PI, therefore, is often demanded but rarely analysed. According to Lange and Schimank (2004: 13) claims for integration are not made until integration has actually failed and disintegrative effects have occurred. Successful integration, in fact, does not attract anyone's attention. If this holds for PI either: What kind of integration problems are supposed to be addressed by PI?

PI refers to the observation of badly coordinated and calibrated political problem solving activities. Demands for PI usually arise, when the policy system is too little integrated. In this state of under-integration policies are found to be, if at all, only loosely connected among each other. Instead of a well ordered policy system there are numerous separated and freely moving policies in place.<sup>25</sup> According to one common line of argumentation this kind of under-integration may entail "external effects" (cf. Underdal 1980, Rowe 2000, Briassoulis 2005b: 17): Political decisions within one policy sector are rather imprecise and induce "unexpected and often unwanted [...] consequences [within other sectors, B.B.] that were not taken into account in the process of policy-making" (Meijers/Stead 2004: 1).

A second motif of disintegration diagnoses refers to insufficient problem solving capacities. The established policy system appears to be incapable to cope with the immense complexity of prevailing societal problems. As Briassoulis puts it:

„Contemporary policy problems are complex, resulting from the intricate interplay of biophysical and human driving forces over time, cutting across ecological, social, economic, administrative and political boundaries and transgressing the functional specialization of most current political and administrative systems [...]” (Briassoulis 2004: 2-3)

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<sup>25</sup> A paradigmatic diagnosis is given by Briassoulis: „Policies are often found to be little coordinated, to overlap or even to be in conflict. The policy system is unduly complicated, producing inefficient or even ineffective solutions and giving rise to new problems and waste of resources.” (Briassoulis 2004: 2)

Both motifs, external effects and insufficient problem solving capacity, are two sides of the same coin. They are rooted in an inadequate projection of real world complexity within the policy making system's structure and processes.<sup>26</sup> Policy making usually takes place within spatially, substantially and socially separated policy arenas and evolves in temporally sequential or simultaneous policy cycles. Within these separated policy arenas problems are perceived and processed in a selective and incomprehensive way<sup>27</sup> impeding the production effective solutions for comprehensive problems (motif 2) and inducing externalities (motif 1). Both motifs, emphasising problems of efficiency, effectiveness and coherence, point to deviations from the ideal type model of rational policy making.<sup>28</sup>

## 4.2 Therapy: Idea and concepts of PI

Against this backdrop, what is expected of PI? Generally spoken, PI is an answer to the deficient order of the policy making system: “[PI] is needed to hold the policy system together, to overcome its tendencies towards disorder, and to manage the numerous policy interconnections” (Briassoulis 2004: 13). PI represents a repairing mechanism for the functional differentiation and structural fragmentation of the policy system. At its core PI is about overcoming the “institutional misfit” by structurally and procedurally reproducing the real-world substantial interdependencies within the system of policy production. According to Meijers and Stead, PI

„[...] concerns the management of cross-cutting issues in policy-making that transcend the boundaries of established policy fields, and which often do not correspond to the institutional responsibilities of individual departments.“ (Meijers/Stead 2004: 12)

The overall functions of PI are to dissolve contradictions, to reduce redundancies, and to exploit synergies between policies. PI is about the construction of a seamless and precisely working policy making system producing efficient and effective solutions. Without a doubt this mainstream understanding of PI rests on the ideal of a comprehensively rational policy making (cf. Rowe 2000, Underdal 1980). However, PI is not a unitary concept. It is rather an umbrella term integrating a range of various concepts. In spite of different origins, accents, and emphasizes all of them refer to the issue of a disintegrated problem solving system and are directed at increasing its coherence, effectiveness, and efficiency.<sup>29</sup> Subsequently, instead of exploring particular conceptions in detail, I

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<sup>26</sup> According to Jordan this can be described as „[m]ismatch of institutions to problems” (Jordan 2002: 52).

<sup>27</sup> The selectivity stems from limited cognitive capacities, partial interests, different normative beliefs and evaluative criteria, selective rationalities, incomplete knowledge, and so on.

<sup>28</sup> From a polity perspective the disintegration of policies appears as a problem of political order and legitimacy. According to the theory of complex democracy (Schmidt 2000: 294pp.) insufficient problem solving capacities go hand in hand with a diminished output-legitimation of the political system as a whole. From a politics perspective, under-integration appears also as a power related problem for political actors. Incoherent or even contradictory courses of governmental actions may be perceived by the public not only as a lack of problem-solving capacity but also as a deficient unity and lack of political leadership within government, reducing public support and the chance of being re-elected. Overall, the disintegration of the policy system appears as a multi-faceted political problem with potential impacts on the political system's problem solving function, its order and stability as well as the allocation and distribution of power within it.

<sup>29</sup> In the literature related to policy analysis we find concepts like “policy coherence” and “policy consistency” (OECD 1996, 2002b, 2003), “cross-cutting policy-making” (cf. Flynn 1999), “joined-up government” (Ling 2002) and “policy co-ordination” (Peters 1998). The literature on organisation theory provides concepts like “interorganisational coordination” (Rogers/Whetten 1982, Alexander 1995), and “interorganizational policy making”

present some basic analytical categories that may help do differentiate various types and conceptions of PI.

#### 4.2.1 *Object of integration: policies*

Surprisingly, PI approaches remain rather vague and unspecified with respect to their object (policies).<sup>30</sup> Overall, the notion of policy is referred to in three ways. First, policies are conceptualised as policy fields. Hence PI entails the coordination of complete policy fields with the aim of an integrated policy system (cf. Briassoulis 2005b). Second, more often, policies are thought of in a more narrow way as single political programs. Consequently, PI appears as a punctual and issue related coordination of political activities. Both interpretations refrain from further differentiations of policies. Often policies are identified with and confined to goals, measures and instruments. According to a third understanding policies refer to societal and economic sectors and PI is about the tight coordination of sectoral activities (Persson 2003: 24).

#### 4.2.2 *Inter- vs. intra-policy integration*

With respect to their direction we can differentiate two types of PI. First, as far as PI refers to the integration of various different policies on the same level, we talk of “inter-policy integration” or “horizontal integration” (Briassoulis 2005b: 25pp., 2005a: 74). Second, “intra-policy integration” or “vertical integration” means the internal integration of a single policy (ibid.).<sup>31</sup> Whereas inter-policy integration aims at making different policies mutually coherent, intra-policy integration focuses on the internal consistency (e.g. between program formulation and implementation) of a single policy.

#### 4.2.3 *PI as process or output*

As pointed out in the preceding chapter integration can be conceived of as a process and a state – a difference which is also found in the PI discussion. PI refers to processes of policy making (Bernard/Armstrong 1998, Underdal 1980) as well as to policy outputs and outcomes (Robinson/Tinker 1998). An output-oriented understanding of PI focuses on the integration of goals, measures and instruments. A procedural understanding of PI emphasises the policy making process itself (Holtz 1998). This differentiation has some relevant practical and evaluative implications. A substantial PI concept derives strategies for PI from a (hypothetically) integrated end-state and measures their success with reference to that end-state. A procedural understanding conceptualises PI in terms of an open and inductive effort. Therefore, success has to be measured according to procedural criteria.

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(Hanf/Scharpf 1978). Although these concepts are often used synonymously, a closer look unveils differences with respect to their broadness, goals, requirements, etc. (cf. Meijers/Stead 2004: 2pp.).

<sup>30</sup> For an exception cf. Briassoulis (2005c).

<sup>31</sup> For a different and contradictory application of these notions see Jänicke (2004: 318) and Lafferty (2004: 204pp.).

### **4.3 Policy Integration – some critical remarks on the debate**

The discussion on PI provides us with a quite abstract general meaning of the word on the one hand and some conceptual heterogeneity on the other hand. Due to its multidisciplinary nature, the discussion is itself fragmented. All in all, there is no coherent common meaning of PI. The literature pertaining to PI provides only few analytical differentiations to grasp and describe phenomena of PI. Sometimes the analytical concepts are used in contradictory ways. These analytical shortcomings may probably be traced back to the normative-prescriptive bias of the discussion. Furthermore the conceptual discussion focuses more on strategies and tools for PI as well as on the identification of opportunities and restrictions for PI (Halpert 1982, Hanf/Scharpf 1978, Meijers/Stead 2004). All in all, the empirical-analytical specification of PI phenomena takes a back-seat. The discussion is rather unspecific and little elaborated with respect to the conceptualisation of integration (“what exactly is integration about?”) as well as the notion of policies (“what are policies?”). Thereby, potentials for analytical differentiation are given away, and a crypto-normative usage of the concept is fostered.<sup>32</sup> The following section tackles with this need for conceptual explication by reflecting on a notion of PI for the context of SD.

## **5 Policy Integration for Sustainable Development**

The purpose of this chapter is to develop a notion of PI for SD by referring to the conceptual remarks in the preceding chapters. After some basic reflections on the general relationship between SD and PI, I will critically examine the notion of “environmental policy integration” (EPI), a specific PI concept, that has gained prominence within the debate on governance for SD (GSD). Finally, an alternative approach of thinking about PI for SD is presented.

### **5.1 SD and PI – General Considerations**

What can be said about the general relationship between PI and SD thus far? For what reason is PI assumed to be a core element of GSD at all? First, both concepts comprise specific diagnoses of deficiencies as well as therapeutical approaches. Whereas SD provides an answer to the unsustainable developmental of societies, PI replies to the fragmentation of the policy system. There would be a tight connection between both concepts, if both diagnoses were interlinked, that means, if unsustainable development were rooted in the pattern of fragmented problem-solving or vice versa. At least the former version seems to be uncontested in the literature: SD problems result from negative externalities of separately produced policies (cf. OECD 2001, 2002a: 9pp.). Accordingly, a fragmented policy system is not only insufficient with regard to the solution of complex SD problems, but is also responsible for their emergence.

Furthermore, there are similarities between the concepts’ particular problem diagnoses and solution approaches. Both concepts deal with issues of complexity and interdependency. Whereas PI is supposed to reintegrate the policy system by relating fragmented policies, SD is about the integration

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<sup>32</sup> „[P]eople's ways of seeing policy integration depend on their goals” (Holtz 1998: 285).



of multiple societal development pathways by ordering complex temporal, spatial, sectoral, and social interdependencies. Assuming that the former (the integration of policy systems) contributes to the latter (the integration of societal development), there is a tight connection between the respective therapeutical programs of SD and PI. Accordingly, the *general* PI idea – managing interdependencies between policies to control external effects and bring about solutions for complex problems – appears to be in line with the *general* idea of SD.

Nevertheless, both concepts – and this is another similarity – are rather vague. Therefore, we are again facing the question, how the general notion of PI can be specified for the particular context of SD. The subsequent chapter refers to one particular strand of discussion that explicitly puts PI in the context of governance for SD: environmental policy integration.

## 5.2 Sustainable development and EPI

### 5.2.1 *The discussion on EPI*

As sketched out above, PI is discussed in different scientific and political contexts. However, of particular prominence is the discussion on PI in the field of environmental policy (Briassoulis 2005b: 1). There has been an on going debate on EPI since the beginning of the institutionalisation of environmental policy (Müller 2002). It is now widely accepted that environmental protection is a cross-sectional endeavour.<sup>33</sup> Hence, environmental issues have to be considered within all policy sectors. During the 1990s the discussion on EPI has gained new relevance and dynamic: first, in the course of the „Cardiff-Process“, that is directed the integration of environmental objectives in the EU’s sectoral policies<sup>34</sup> and second, within the discussion about GSD.<sup>35</sup> According to the latter debate EPI is a central element of SD.<sup>36</sup> In spite of an increasing amount of conceptual contributions<sup>37</sup> and empirical studies<sup>38</sup> on EPI the essential meaning of the concept still remains unclear (cf. Hertin/Berkhout 2003: 40). Subsequently, to illustrate the field’s diversity, two prominent conceptions of EPI are briefly sketched out and analysed with regard to their understanding of integration as well as to their relation with SD.

Martin Jänicke’s oeuvre doesn’t provide a uniform and concise definition of EPI at all. Furthermore, he uses the notion interchangeably with various synonyms (cf. Mez/Jänicke/Binder 1997: 10). Nevertheless he makes some conceptual remarks on EPI. According to Jänicke, EPI is directed at internalising responsibilities for environmental protection in all problem causing policy sectors

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<sup>33</sup> Energy policies, traffic policies, agricultural policies and almost all other policy sectors have relevant impacts and mostly negative effects on the environment. Frequently the efforts of environmental policy are countered by impacts of sectoral policies.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Buck/Kraemer/Wilkinson (1999), Lenschow (2002: 9pp.), Kraack/Pehle/Zimmermann-Steinhart (1998).

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Connor/Dovers (2004), Liberatore (1997), Persson (2003), Lenschow (2002: 5pp.), Lafferty (2004).

<sup>36</sup> According to Lenschow “[t]he principle of environmental policy integration may be considered a core application of the concept of sustainable development [...]. EPI presents a first-order operational principle to implement and institutionalise the idea of sustainable development” (Lenschow 2002: 5).

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Collier (1994), Liberatore (1997), Hertin/Berkhout (2003), Lafferty/Hovden (2002).

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Hey (2002), Buller (2002), Lafferty *et al.* (2004), Lafferty *et al.* (2002), Hertin/Berkhout (2003), Stead (2003).

(Jänicke/Jörgens 2004: 334). The various policy fields and their related sectors are no longer seen as objects of an external environmental policy, but become responsible subjects who themselves reduce their environmental impacts (Mez *et al.* 1997: 10). Therefore EPI aims at reducing environmental impacts at their sources instead of pursuing end-of-the-pipe approaches.<sup>39</sup> Accordingly, Jänicke frames EPI as a substantial policy approach directed at the ecologicalisation of policy fields and the economic sectors associated with them. Jänicke develops his notion of EPI within the broader frame of „ecological modernisation“. He does not display any further conceptual connections to the idea of SD.

Based on a critical analysis of literature on EPI, Lafferty and Hovden (2002: 7pp.) suggest the following definition:

- „Environmental policy integration implies the incorporation of environmental objectives into all stages of policymaking in non-environmental policy sectors, with a specific recognition of this goal as a guiding principle for the planning and execution of policy;
- accompanied by an attempt to aggregate presumed environmental consequences into an overall evaluation of policy, and a commitment to minimise contradictions between environmental and sectoral policies by giving *principled priority* to the former over the latter.“ (Lafferty/Hovden 2002: 15, my emphasises)

In contrast to Jänicke’s concept this notion clearly exhibits a normative „bias“. According to Lafferty/Hovden, EPI does explicitly not imply the balancing of different goals, but a principled prioritisation of environmental objectives.<sup>40</sup> Lafferty/Hovden explicitly relate their concept to the idea of SD. However, due to the hierarchal understanding of integration, their conception appears to be compatible only with SD conceptions that entail the prioritisation of the ecological dimension.

### 5.2.2 *EPI and SD – A critique*

EPI is considered to be a core element of politics for SD. Lenschow characterises SD as the „mother concept“ of EPI (2002: 7) whereas Liberatore assumes a straight-forward relationship between EPI and SD (Liberatore 1997: 107). However, the examination of different conceptions may give the impression that the connection to the “mother concept” remains rather loose and weak. In fact, various authors – besides Jänicke also Hertin/Berkhout (2003) – relate EPI explicitly to the idea of „ecological modernisation“. In fact, EPI has not yet been proved to be a constituent element of SD. Against this backdrop the question arises, whether there is a relationship between EPI and SD at all, and, if so, whether the concept is appropriate with respect to the integrative SD idea.

The core idea of EPI is to integrate environmental objectives into various sectoral policies (cf. Hertin/Berkhout 2003: 40). However, regarding the aims and purposes of integration there are different

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<sup>39</sup> Such an integrative strategy is assumed not only to be more efficient in economic terms, but also more effective with respect to the treatment of persistent environmental problems (Jänicke/Jörgens 2004). Additive approaches go hand in hand with the systematic shifting of problems entailing an overload of the state’s problem solving capacity on the long run (Jänicke/Mönch/Binder 2000: 134, Jänicke 1986).

<sup>40</sup> „Most discussions of EPI assume either that the environmental and non-environmental objectives should be balanced [...]. We would argue that the whole point of EPI is, at the very least, to avoid situations where environmental objectives become subsidiary; and in the view of sustainable development, to ensure that they become principal or overarching societal objectives. This is arguably the essential difference between ‘environmental policy integration’ and ‘policy integration’ conceived more generally.“ (Lafferty/Hovden 2002: 15)

conceptions in place. Some authors expect EPI to rationalise environmental policy and political problem solving as a whole (e.g. Jänicke). According to other authors, EPI is supposed to readjust the political systems value set and normative balance (e.g. Lafferty/Hovden). Following the latter interpretation, EPI principally prioritises environmental objectives over those of the respective policy sectors implying an asymmetric understanding of integration. Thus it is only compatible with conceptions of SD that are themselves based on a symmetric notion of integration. Contrary to this, rationalisation approaches aim at optimising sectoral policies with respect to their environmental impacts. These conceptions are, *prima facie*, based on a symmetric (“balancing”) notion of integration and therefore appear compatible only with balancing conceptions of SD. In general, different conceptions of EPI appear to be compatible with different conceptions of SD.

Despite these differences, all EPI conceptions display a uniform understanding concerning the direction of integration. In general, EPI is conceptualised as a unidirectional integration activity aiming at the integration of environmental objectives *into* other sectoral policies.<sup>41</sup> This one-sided relation of policies rests on a hegemonic notion of integration. My proposition is that this hegemonical concept of integration is not adequate with respect to the comprehensive idea of SD sketched out in the third chapter. The unidirectional injection of environmental concerns into sectoral policies appears, at best, sufficient to avoid ecological externalities and, therefore, to realise “ecological sustainability”. However, its functionality with regard to SD in a more comprehensive sense cannot be taken for granted

The main argument against this presupposition refers to the diagnosis of nestedness being one of the SD discourse’s constitutive motifs. SD not only refers to ecological, but to multilevel and trans-sectoral problems to be proceeded with reference to a comprehensive set of integrated decision criteria. Although the one-sided incorporation of environmental considerations into sectoral policies partially expands the basis of decision-making, it is not sufficient to overcome the pattern of fragmented policy-making as such. Still there are sectorally defined partial problems, which are managed on the basis of an ecologically expanded set of decision criteria. However, the wider spatial, temporal and social implications of sectoral policies remain underexposed. EPI focuses on ecological impacts of sectoral policies but neglects, for instance, the social impacts of ecologicalised policies. Insofar EPI represents an ecologically oriented partial rationalisation of policy making but its hegemonic concept of integration puts a veil on potential interdependencies between various other problem dimensions as well as the comprehensiveness of SD’s integrative value system.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Young (2000: 11) uses the notion „injection“ to describe EPI.

<sup>42</sup> According to Briassoulis (2004: 13) “[t]he environment-biased assumption of EPI that by somehow introducing environmental considerations in sectoral policies will contribute to the achievement of sustainable development cannot be supported because it prioritizes the environmental dimension of sustainable development, while the broader conceptualization of sustainable development asks for a balance among its economic, environmental and social dimensions.“ However, she misses the actual point. Firstly, a “broader conceptualisation” of SD not necessarily entails a balancing of its different dimensions. We also can conceive of broad SD conceptions prioritising single dimensions of SD. Second, as we have seen, conceptions of EPI not per se go hand in hand with the prioritisation of the ecological dimension. Third, neither the systematic prioritisation of a single dimension nor the balancing of dimensions can be regarded as universally valid premises of SD. With respect to the SD idea’s contest-

It should have become clear that, unlike EPI, SD implies an extensive as well as a reciprocal understanding of PI.

Taking the preceding remarks into account, not only the rhetorical but also the conceptual connections between EPI and a comprehensive concept of SD appear to be weak. In particular EPI's selective and one-sided understanding of integration appears to be too narrow an approach to cope with the normatively and empirically comprehensive integrative SD idea. EPI is neither suitable to overcome the basic pattern of fragmented policy making nor appropriate in normative terms. The following overview displays some preliminary differences between EPI and a comprehensive notion of PI for SD that will be further elaborated in the following chapter.

Figure 1: Comparison of EPI and PI for SD

|                                | <b>EPI</b>  | <b>PI for SD</b>   |
|--------------------------------|---|--|
| <i>Paradigm</i>                | „Ecological modernisation“  | „Sustainable development“  |
| <i>Approach to integration</i> | Integration of environmental objectives into sectoral policies<br>Unidirectional, hegemonic integration: incorporation, injection:<br>“[I]ncorporating concerns of one policy into another” (Briassoulis 2004: 10). | Integration between various policies with respect to SD<br>Reciprocal / mutual integration<br>“[C]oordinating policies into a unified whole” (Briassoulis 2004: 10). |
| <i>Aims</i>                    | Reducing environmentally related externalities of sectoral policies<br>Optimising sectoral policies with respect to their environmental impacts   | Comprehensive control of mutual externalities between policies<br>Optimising and readjusting the policy system with regard to the requirements of SD                 |
| <i>Policy-Making</i>           | Sectoral policy making:<br>„ecologically expanded“ partial problems as well as decision criteria  | Trans-sectoral policy making:<br>policy-transgressing problem complexes and problem solving approaches   |
| <i>Extensivity</i>             | Integration is confined to sectoral dimension   | Encompassing integration: space, time, sectors   |
| <i>Output</i>                  | Ecologicalised sectoral policies  | Integrative policy for SD  |

### 5.3 PI for SD – Contours of a concept

Subsequently I will outline an alternative and more appropriate way of thinking about PI in the context of SD. The concept is developed from a “design perspective”. Thus I attempt to make reasoned remarks on how the policy system ought to be constructed and managed in order to meet the integrative requirements of SD. Hence, the concept can be conceived of as an ideal type (“*Idealtyp*”) that may serve prescriptive as well as empirical-analytical purposes. After pointing out some basic assumptions, I present the main features of PI for SD by referring to the three basic dimensions of integration: function, structure, and process.

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edness the question of prioritisation appears as a socio-political issue that cannot be resolved *by definition*. The main point rendering EPI inadequate for SD is its lacking normative comprehensiveness in connection with its hegemonic concept of integration. EPI neglects potential interdependencies and violates the comprehensive normative core of SD.

### 5.3.1 Basic assumptions

According to the third chapter, SD represents a comprehensive idea of societal development. Although SD claims to be universally valid, it is, nevertheless, a contested and, therefore, political idea, that has to be interpreted within different historical and cultural contexts. Both, the idea's integrative basic structure (normative core and worldview) as well as its conceptual ambiguity and inherent dynamic are taken as initial points for thinking about PI. This framing of SD as an integrative but "open" idea renders inadequate substantial notions of PI that frame PI in terms of fixed, substantively defined objectives from which concrete strategies and measures for integration are derived (cf. Holtz 1998: 290pp.). Instead, PI for SD has to be conceived of as an inherently dynamic effort and, therefore, has to be framed as a procedural concept.

SD emphasises the complex interconnectedness of societal areas and environmental spheres. Unlike other policy fields (e.g. environmental policy, economic policy, education policy etc.), SD does not refer to a single and fixed object or functional sphere in the real world. Hence, SD cannot be thought of as just another policy field among others. In fact, SD has to be conceptualized as a policy that integrates various separated policies. Therefore, SD entails PI *per definition*: PI is not merely a core element, but a constitutive feature of SD. Who wants to get SD must provide PI. It is the SD idea itself that contains particular requirements specifying PI in functional, structural and procedural terms.

### 5.3.2 Functional dimension

What are the general functions of PI in the context of SD? As pointed out above, SD can not be thought of as being a "traditional" policy field in a traditional sense. Its objects are not policy-specific but policy-transgressing socio-ecological problems. SD policies are not so much directed at governing the society but the policy system itself. In this sense, SD policies are supposed to steer various policies that are themselves directed at steering society. Both, the policy-transgressing problem area as well as its policy-related coordination function render SD an *integrative meta-policy*<sup>43</sup> representing a frame of integration in two respects: First, the frame (SD policy) itself is constituted by other policies and, therefore, appears as the result of an integration process. Second, the frame integrates policies by establishing interconnections and limiting their movability with respect to the idea of SD. Hence, SD policies are integrated as well as integrative by definition.

What are the particular functions of such an integrative SD policy? First, one purpose is the rationalisation of the policy making system. Like PI in general, PI for SD in particular is directed at reducing external effects between policies as well as enhancing the policy system's capacity to cope with complex problems effectively. Nevertheless, PI for SD differs in some ways from this mainstream function. PI for SD is more than making the policy system consistent and efficient. It is about recalibrating the established policy systems with respect to the requirements of SD. Apart from its rationalisation function, PI for SD aims at readjusting the overall balance of values and

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<sup>43</sup> Without further elaborating on the topic, O'Toole (2004: 38) defines meta-policy in a general sense as a „policy designed to guide the development of numerous more specific policies“.

goals as well as expanding and transforming the existing policy related decision criteria with respect to the normative requirements of SD.

However, beneath its abstract integrative structure, SD does not provide us with a universally valid system of goals that may guide the readjustment of the policy system. Moreover the contestedness of the idea and its inherent dynamic entail essential normative ambivalences as well as cognitive ambiguities and uncertainties. This openness implies that an integrative policy for SD continuously has to establish and specify its own normative and empirical reference points. These ambitious functions have repercussions on the structural and procedural dimensions of PI for SD.

### 5.3.3 *Structural dimension*

The structural dimension of an integrative SD policy is described by referring to the analytical differentiations derived from the exploration of the notion of integration and the integrative SD idea. The proposed features represent basic structural requirements for institutional arrangements concerned with the making of SD policies.

#### 5.3.3.1 Extensive policy integration

SD represents a comprehensive idea of societal development. Hence it implies an extensive and encompassing notion of PI. The necessity to relate a broad range of different policy fields accrues from the diagnosis of complex and interdependent socio-ecological problems. There is *prima facie* no policy that has no relevance for SD at all. Therefore PI for SD differs from PI conceptions that selectively relate single policies. However, extensity is not confined to the horizontal dimension of the policy system but refers as well to its vertical direction. Though the integration of policies across various spatial layers is a general requirement towards rational policy making, it appears to be of particular importance within an integrative SD policy given the diagnosis of spatially encompassing problems. Besides these sectoral and spatial dimensions, an integrative SD policy has to be extensive within the time dimension for PI is a constitutive element of politics for SD. Accordingly, we cannot think of PI as a temporally limited effort confined to “discrete events”. Instead PI for SD has to be conceptualised as “structured, long-term process” (cf. Jordan 2002: 42).

#### 5.3.3.2 Partial policy integration

What degree of PI is required by SD? Does SD entail the unification of policies or are they supposed to remain relatively autonomous? My proposition is that an integrative SD policy requires a high degree of integration, but does not entail unification. An integrative SD policy is based on a particularistic notion of integration for the following reasons. The unification of policy sectors would go hand in hand with the loss of differentiation. Therefore, such a mode of integration reduces the capacity to grasp complexity and, consequently, entails problems of *over-integration*.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Over-integration means a too stark limitation of the integrated parts’ degrees of freedom, whereby the integrated parts lose their particular identities. Over-integration entails functional problems insofar as the dissolving of differentiated functions is accompanied by a loss of the innovative potentials of functional differentiation (cf. Lange/Schimank 2004: 13p.).

An integrative policy for SD faces the challenge of handling a high degree of complexity presupposing a highly differentiated problem solving system. Thus an integrative SD policy requires differentiation to be managed, but not to be dissolved.

#### 5.3.3.3 Reciprocal inter-policy integration

PI for SD has to be thought of as reciprocal inter-policy integration. The concept of inter-policy integration appears to meet the functional requirements of an integrative SD policy better than the more narrow conception of intra-policy integration for the latter aims at achieving consistency within single policies, but is not able to cope with potential policy-transgressing complexity. With respect to the discussion on EPI, PI as unidirectional infusion approach has proved to be insufficient for the context of SD. Against the backdrop of a normatively comprehensive SD idea and its diagnosis of complex interdependencies PI for SD has to enable reciprocity. A mode of reciprocal integration seems not only most appropriate in coping with policy-transgressing problems, but also to activate and coordinate dispersed resources.

#### 5.3.3.4 Transformative policy integration

PI for SD does not only serve to produce a policy system that is free of contradictions. As sketched out above, an integrative SD policy is even more ambitious. It is directed at exploring policy-transgressing problems, exploiting common decision options, and re-adjusting the integrated parts themselves. The integrative SD idea implies the re-framing and re-construction of existent problems and problem solving approaches. Policy specific problems ought to be questioned and replaced by integrated problem perceptions. Furthermore SD implies the expansion of the normative and empirical basis of decision-making. SD policy requires new solutions for new problems. Accordingly, PI for SD implies a transformative conception of integration. This means that the integration of policies entails their re-shaping. Such an understanding differs from conservative notions of PI that intend to minimise contradictions between policies.

#### 5.3.3.5 Symmetric policy integration?

What requirements regarding the symmetry of an integrated policy system can we derive from the SD idea? Does SD imply the prioritisation of a particular policy? As indicated above, there is a controversy with regard to the question of prioritisation vs. balancing of different dimensions of SD. It can be assumed that different positions within this debate will probably give different answers to the question above. Due to various theoretical and normative problems, which cannot be pointed out here, we cannot make any a priori statements about the relative position of single policies within an integrated policy system. Whether one policy has to be systematically prioritised is a value question that cannot be decided once and for all. However, the requirement of reciprocity may speak against a hierarchal structure and for a principled balancing of policies for asymmetry likely prevents the establishment of reciprocal relationships between policies and furthers a unidirectional mode of integration.

### 5.3.4 Procedural dimension

In the previous part I sketched out the basic structure of a PI system based on a highly abstract and aggregated notion of policy (“policy fields”) that systematically neglects the procedural dimension of PI. However, the process dimension appears to be essential for several reasons. First, as we have seen, SD is a contested concept. Beneath a rather abstract core, there are no universally valid normative conceptions of SD in place that could serve as universally applicable, substantial blueprints for problem-solving. SD is an ambivalent concept that has to be adapted and modified according to particular contexts. Second, we do not even know the concrete problems SD is referring to. The concept itself doesn’t tell us about that. We only know about basic problem structures as well as some general problem characteristics: SD draws our attention to the ambiguity, complexity, inherent dynamic as well as to the uncertainty of real world phenomena. Ambiguity means that the problem is in the eye of the beholder. Complexity refers to substantial interdependencies among multiple problem dimensions whereas dynamic implies that problems themselves are constantly evolving and transforming their shape. Both induce uncertainty that describes a state of systematically lacking knowledge regarding present and future problems. Given these problem characteristics, PI for SD has to be thought of as a dynamic effort that aims at closing the normative and cognitive openness and potentiality. How can such a mode of integrative policy making be conceptualized?

*Policy making in general* can be framed in two ways. First, from a problem oriented perspective, policy making appears as a rational problem solving activity referring to substantive real world problems that are analysed and solved according to the best available knowledge. Second, from an interaction-oriented perspective, policy making is more about social processes between actors with different problem perceptions, normative and causal beliefs etc. *Policy making for SD in particular* has to cope with fundamental problem characteristics in both dimensions. Within the first dimension complexity and uncertainty are critical factors. From the second perspective, the main difficulties lie in the ambiguity of problem perceptions and the ambivalence of values and goals with respect to SD. Each of these fundamental problem characteristics requires particular integration efforts: Complexity implies analytical integration, uncertainty demands for knowledge integration, ambiguity requires conceptual integration and ambivalence calls for normative integration. These dimensions can be related to a (rather simple) process model, according to which policy making involves two steps: problem definition and problem solution.

#### 5.3.4.1 Integrative problem definition

As pointed out above, SD presupposes integration with respect to the definition of problems. An integrative problem definition involves integration efforts with respect to the substantial analysis of problem complexity as well as the cognitive perception and conceptual framing of problems. It aims at generating „integrated problem constructions” that refer to a commonly shared perception frame and are characterised by substantially comprehensive analyses.



### Substantive-analytical integration (complexity)

SD's integrative world view implies analytical integration efforts to grasp the substantive complexity and nestedness of real-world problems. *Substantive-analytical integration* aims at understanding real-world nested systems as well as complex cause-effect-relations within them. The resulting problem analyses are characterised by the systematic consideration of “objectively given” spatial, temporal, sectoral and social interdependencies.

### Cognitive-conceptual integration (ambiguity)

The requirement of cognitive-conceptual integration accrues from the general assumption according to which problems are not fixed and objective entities “out there”, but are socially constructed. This assumption applies in particular to SD problems being not only complex but highly ambiguous by definition. Unlike “ordinary” policy problems, SD problems do not refer to fixed policy frames. Cognitive conceptual integration implies that SD problems have to be constructed referring to and mutually relating various dispersed problem perceptions within an overarching and comprehensive problem frame.

#### 5.3.4.2 Integrative decisions

Integrative decisions are based on normatively and cognitively comprehensive and mutually related decision premises. They aim at overcoming partial and selective decision rationalities by expanding their normative fundament as well as referring to their potential impacts within different dimensions.

### Normative integration (ambivalence)

Despite its normative core, SD is not a uniform goal that can be defined and operationalised in terms of a straightforward and unequivocal set of decision criteria. Instead, SD relates and integrates a variety of different values and goals, that themselves are “moving” and contested. This ambivalence implies that a SD policy has to build its own normative foundations by integrating the legitimate plurality of values and goals and relating them to the abstract normative principles of SD.

### Knowledge integration (uncertainty)

A comprehensive system of goals as such increases the demands for reflecting and assessing decision impacts. Decisions that are based on an integrative set of criteria have to be assessed not only with respect to their potential impacts on single goals but in relation to a multiplicity of values and dimensions. Furthermore, an integrative assessment of decisions gains relevance with respect to the motif of “limits”. The existence of “critical loads” demands decision impacts to be synoptically and cumulatively. However, the complexity and inherent dynamics of socio-ecological problems as well as SD's constantly moving normative and conceptual fundamentals renders this an endeavour characterised by essential uncertainties. Therefore, integrative decisions do not only have to refer to

and relate various practical and scientific strands of knowledge in order to reduce uncertainties. They also have to integrate and adopt uncertainty as a decision premise. In sum, integrative decisions are based on premises taking account of both the comprehensive assessment of potential impacts within various time horizons and spatial layers as well as inherent knowledge uncertainties.

After all, the relationship between SD and PI can be conceptualised within three dimensions. First, in a functional sense, PI for SD appears as an integrative meta-policy representing an overarching frame for ordering and arranging previously separated policies. Second, SD specifies the basic structure of an integrated policy system. This structure is characterised by extensity, reciprocity, transformativity, particularity. The third dimension refers to a specific pattern of integrative policy making for SD. All three dimensions are complementary and constitutive for an integrative SD policy. Whereas the structural dimension describes the fundamental configuration of the PI framework, the procedural dimension refers to the interaction between policies within this framework and therefore focuses on the making of integrated policies. The functional dimension refers to the embeddedness of the PI system within the larger context of the political-administrative system.

The following overview sums up the suggested dimensions and criteria for analysing and assessing efforts of PI for SD.

*Figure 2: Policy Integration for Sustainable Development*

| <b>Function</b>  | <b>Structure</b>  | <b>Process</b>   |
|--|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Integrative meta-policy</li> <li>- Rationalisation of policy system</li> <li>- Readjustment of policy system</li> <li>- Closing of interpretive openness</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Extensive PI</li> <li>- Partial PI</li> <li>- Reciprocal PI</li> <li>- Transformative PI</li> <li>- Symmetric PI?</li> </ul> | <p><i>Integrative problem definition</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Substantive-analytical integration (complexity)</li> <li>- Cognitive-conceptual integration (ambiguity)</li> </ul> <p><i>Integrative decision</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Normative integration (ambivalence)</li> <li>- Knowledge integration / integrated assessment (uncertainty)</li> </ul> |

## 6 Concluding remarks

The overriding aim of the paper was to sketch out a notion of PI that is adequate for the context of SD. I argued that such a concept has to be theoretically linked to the integrative requirements of the SD idea itself. After clarifying the general notion of integration, I re-interpreted SD in terms of integration. It could have been shown that integration is an underlying motif of the SD discourse in general. However, beneath an abstract integrative structure at a rather uncontested level of meaning, SD entails various different and conflicting notions of integration. Consequently SD comprises no unequivocal understanding of integration, but a variety of different integration conceptions. As a result a straightforward relationship between SD and PI has to be refused. However, I decided to take both, the idea's overarching integrative structure as well as its contestedness as initial points for the development of a PI concept.

After examining the general notion of PI and displaying some analytical differentiations, I further discussed the conception of EPI that has gained prominence within the upcoming debate on SD politics. Referring to the integrative SD idea, I argued that EPI is not an appropriate concept for thinking about PI in the context of SD for it appears to be of a too narrow normative and empirical scope.

Based on these considerations, I sketched out the contours of an alternative PI concept for the context of SD. According to this, SD specifies PI with respect to its functional, structural, and procedural properties. In functional terms an integrative SD policy has to be conceptualised as an integrative meta-policy concerned with the management of interdependencies across the policy system. With respect to its basic structure SD implies an extensive, partial, reciprocal, transformative as well as a principally symmetric understanding of PI. From a procedural perspective PI for SD has to be conceived of as an approach toward integrative problem-solving comprising analytical, conceptual, normative as well as knowledge-related integration efforts to cope with SD's inherent complexities, ambiguities, ambivalences, and uncertainties.

The proposed concept may serve two purposes. First, in a prescriptive sense, it provides particular structural, functional, and procedural requirements for designing institutional arrangements concerned with the production of integrative SD policies. Second, it could be used for analysing and evaluating existent SD policy arrangements (e.g. national SD strategies) with regard to their efforts toward policy integration for SD. However, for both of these purposes the general framework proposed in this paper has to be operationalised with respect to the particular empirical context.

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