

From Rio to Rio+20

The ongoing challenge of integrating the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development in Europe

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The journey to – and from – Rio:

- Understanding the journey to Rio sets parameters for assessing progress from Rio
- The "doctrinal essence" of sustainable development emerged (1968-1988) through a "dialectical" interchange within and between two parallel sets of opposing values:
 - The exploitation of nature vs the protection and conservation of nature (in virtually all nations)
 - ➤ The exploitation of the resources of "less-developed" ("Southern") nations by dominant "highly-developed" ("Northern") nations
- The first dialectic has gradually evolved into an ongoing discourse on:
 ecological sustainability
- And the second dialectic has continued to develop as a discourse on:
 global equity and universal standards of human development





The journey to – and from – Rio:

- The conflicts within and between the two discourses led to the establishment by the United Nations of the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) in 1983
- The concluding report of the Commission Our Common Future in 1987 became the single most authoritative source for both understanding and normatively "anchoring" the concept of "sustainable development"
- Known more generally as "The Brundtland Report", the document provided the normative principles and analytic guidelines for both the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development and the Rio Global Plan of Action – Agenda 21.
- None of these documents have been significantly superceded by any subsequent international agreements on SD – including the "Outcome Document" of Rio+20





The ethics of compulsion in the SD challenge:

Why "should" we do – what we say we "have" to do?

As a moral call for goal-oriented change, the United Nations call for sustainable development has drawn on **three dominant theories of ethics**:

I. Natural law ethics:

- The call for "environmental/ecological sustainability" is a call to act in accord with "the laws of nature"
- Natural-law ethics fell out of favour as a guide to "universal" standards of behaviour due to the insights of cultural-anthropology, the sociology of knowledge and linguistic philosophy
- The norms have returned, however with telling moral urgency in regard to the "carrying capacity of the Earth", and the role of natural science in documenting the negative effects of emissions and depletions in resource stocks and biodiversity
- We cannot "read nature" as a guide for what humans <u>should</u> do but natural scientists have consistently told us what we <u>shouldn't</u> do!







The ethics of compulsion in the SD challenge:

II. Consensual ethics:

- SD rests solidly on the principles of democratic morality: The stronger the consensus behind a given set of normative goals and guidelines, the greater the moral pressure to act in accordance with the "collective will"
- The UN SD programme emblemizes the approach with: (a) an exceptionally inclusive deliberative process within the WCED; (b) a unanimous endorsement by 167 governments of the Rio principles and action plan designed to realize the values and goals of the WCED; (c) continuous follow-up and renewed endorsement by successive world summits in 2007, 2012, 2017 and most recently last week at Rio+20.
- There is, in short, a solid record of global "soft law" behind SD with a strong potential for much "harder law" in the constitutional-legal framework of the European Union.
- Regardless of obvious difference of opinion as to what SD "really involves", there is virtually <u>no</u> record of oppositional voting in international or regional bodies against the basic idea and its overall values







The ethics of compulsion in the SD challenge:

III. Pragmatic-communitarian ethics:

- The call for SD increasingly builds on a belief that SD is an ultimate "good" because it "works" in practice to promote and secure the "common good".
- "Treating others as we would be treated ourselves" underlies the manifest endorsement of both global equity and generational equity in the very definition of SD itself.
- The "world's poor", "future generations" and the natural life-support systems of the Earth itself, are all objects of preeminent ethical entitlement.
- The moral proscriptions for sustainable development do not rest, therefore, on altruism;
 but on an ethic of interdependent practical "sustainability"
- Given a limited number of life jackets, the "Masters of the Anthropocene" either survive through global communal efforts for sustainability – or sink back into a demonstrably unsustainable "survival of the fittest"







The pragmatic aspect of the Rio journey was also topically focused:

- The Brundtland Report identifies seven "strategic imperatives":
 - Reviving growth
 - Changing the quality of growth
 - Meeting essential needs for jobs, food, energy, water, and sanitation
 - Ensuring a sustainable level of population
 - Conserving and enhancing the resource base
 - Reorienting technology and managing risk
 - Merging environment and economics in decision making

Our Common Future, p. 49

- All seven "imperatives" require specific governing initiatives and goal-directed policy instruments
- "What works? Where? When? and How? was the crucial question for both implementing and assessing the SD programme – and clearly remains so after Rio+20







So - Rio + 20 - Where are we?

The bad news:

- The goal of "realizing Rio" as a general transition to sustainable development has been gradually but consistently "deconstructed" by the UN itself.
- The issue of climate change has co-opted and narrowed the international SD agenda
- The changing fortunes of "globalisation" have strongly affected the parameters of the original Rio "North-South" constellation
- The financial crisis in the Eurozone has seriously undermined the leading role of the European Union on SD implementation
- Virtually all assessments of national implementation of SD have revealed a consistent failure of "political will" in the conversion of SD rhetoric to SD practice
- The recent experience of Rio-2012 poignantly demonstrates the inability of international conferences and agreements to move beyond the moral high-ground of Rio-1992.





Rio+20 – Where are we?

The good news?

- The rhetoric and saleability of "green branding" for business has passed a new threshold. With Rio+20 behind us, the business agenda has in fact superceded the political agenda.
- Marketing and financial conditions for "green innovation" have greatly improved
- The economic downturn in Western high-consumption societies provides an adhoc potential for innovative niches of sustainable production and consumption
- The "movers and shakers" among developing countries (e.g. China, Brazil, Indonesia, India), give signs of developmental values and models that at present prioritize "green energy"
- Germany maintains an active and leading role along several SD dimensions (energy, party politics, institutional change)
- The ESDN continues to play a significant supportive role in a crucial area: focussing and assessing strategies and action plans for sustainable development







Rio+20 - What to do?

I. Focus on improving governance for sustainable development:

- The failure of "political will" is most concisely attributable to two barriers:
 - A general failure of governance in all political systems to adequately address the crucial issue of reconciling trade-offs among economic, social and ecological policy concerns
 - A more specific failure in Western-style democracies to both recognize and overcome the inherent dysfunctionalities of the "competitive"/ "liberal-pluralist" model of democracy itself
- While the first barrier can be addressed by a general application of principles and benchmarks for Environmental Policy Integration (EPI) – which is the key governing instrument for achieving "decoupling" (OECD, EEA)
- The second barrier can only be addressed by a much more critical and constructive debate as to democratic reform for sustainable development
- "Business-as-usual" is, in short, fundamentally supported by "democracy-as-usual" a "deep-structure" barrier hindering more effective change for SD







Rio+20 - What to do?

II. Reconstitute an ethical basis for SD in Europe

- All three of the ethical theories that have under-pinned the UN-Brundtland-Rio consensus, are currently – and for the near future – seriously weakened
- How then to maintain a "moral compulsion" for SD?
- One possible answer (and perhaps the <u>only</u> one in the short run): A form of "testimonial" "situational ethics" in Europe
- Sustainable development should be actively pursued within Europe because the European "political culture" is particularly attuned to the values of Rio
- The logic and commitment to SD implementation is nowhere more manifest, or more seriously institutionalized, than within the governing framework of the European Union
- The "European crisis" can be specifically addressed by bearing witness to, and further enacting, the moral urgency of the EU Strategy for Sustainable Development.







In sum:

- Just as the European Union "warts and all" retains a distinct regional commitment to "governance for equality", so too can it continue to "bear the burden" of "governance for sustainable development".
- Not only to conserve the battered global ethics of Rio but in the service of SD "damage control" to manifest and demonstrate what makes Europe an historically and culturally "distinct" region.
- Having adopted Barosso's "environmental child" as an equal heir to his "economic" and "social" kids, the European Union should not allow the SD baby to be thrown out with the bathwater of fiscal mismanagement, stagnant growth and crippling austerity.
- The dual themes from Rio+20 Green Economic Growth and Institutional Reform for Sustainable Development – provide unique opportunities for "moral rearmament" in Europe.
- But when it comes to substantive implementation:

"Look not to Rio – but to Gothenburg!"





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[Additional material / perspectives / references]

The concept of sustainable development as endorsed at Rio in 1992 A dual challenge for the "scientific discourse"

"Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

It contains within it two key concepts:

- the concept of 'needs', in particular the essential needs of the world's poor, to which overriding priority should be given; and

THE TASK OF ACADEMIC SCIENCE

PRODUCING CONSENSUAL KNOWLEDGE ON THE MEANING OF "POVERTY", "THE LIMITS OF NATURE", "CLIMTE CHANGE", "BIODIVERSITY", ETC



- the idea of limitations imposed by the state of technology and social organization on the environment's ability to meet present and future needs."

THE TASK OF APPLIED SCIENCE AND SOCIO-TECHNICAL INNOVATION ACHIEVING THE TRANSITION TO SUSTAINABLE PRODUCTION AND CONSUMPTION



STRATEGIC RESEARCH FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT





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Rio+20 Website

Resource Publications on Institutional Framework for SD

<u>Title</u>	<u>Publisher</u>	<u>Year</u>
A Pocket Guide to Sustainable Development Governance	Stakeholder Forum, Commonwealth Secretariat	2011
Beyond Rio+20: Governance for a Green Economy	Pardee Center	2011
Consultants' Report on Options for Broader Reform of the Institutional Framework for Sustainable Development (IFSD): Structural, Legal, and Financial Aspects	Steven Bernstein ☐ with Jutta Brunnée	2011
Discussion Paper 1: International Governance for Sustainable Development and Rio+20: Initial Perspectives	Stakeholder Forum	2010
Environment in the UN System	UNEP	2010
Global Environmental Governance: 4 Steps for Targeted Coherence: A Modular Approach	International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD)	2008
Global Environmental Governance: A Reform Agenda	International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD)	2006
Global Redesign: Strengthening International Cooperation in a More Interdependent World	World Economic Forum	2010
International Covenant on Environment and Development (Draft). Fourth Edition: Updated Text	IUCN Environmental Law Programme	2010
International Environmental Governance: A Legal Analysis of Selected Options	Fritjof Nansen Institute	2010



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Rio+20 Website

Resource Publications on Institutional Framework for SD

International Sustainable Development Governance. The Question of Reform: Key Issues and Proposals	United Nations University	2002
Issues Brief 10 - Regional, national and local level governance for sustainable development	UN-DESA	2011
Issues Brief 2 - Options for Strengthening IFSD: Peer Review	UN-DESA	2011
Issues Brief 3 - IFSD: Issues related to an intergovernmental body on SD	UN-DESA	2011
Making Rio 2012 Work: Setting the stage for global economic, social and ecological renewal	New York University	2011
National Councils for Sustainable Development in Africa: A Review of Institutions and their Functioning	UNECA	2005
Progress to date and remaining gaps in the implementation of the outcomes of the major summits in the area of sustainable development, as well as an analysis of the themes of the Conference	UNDESA	2010
Sustainable Development Governance towards Rio+20: Framing the Debate	Stakeholder Forum	2011
Synthesis report on best practices and lessons learned on the objective and themes of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development	United Nations	2011
The Governance of Non-Legal Entities: An exploration into the challenges facing collaborative, multistakeholder enterprises that are hosted by institutions	International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD)	2008

NB: None of these resource publications devotes serious attention to the issue of democratic models and functional compatibility.





Temporal barriers hindering the SD "endeavour":

- •Time past: Overcoming the "path dependency" of demonstrably nonsustainable values, lifestyles and institutions
- •Time present: Overcoming the dysfunctional values and temporal cycles of "competitive democracy" ("polyarchy" the Western model of democracy)
- •Time future: Coming to grips with the temporal constraints inherent in the self-denying, conservationiist and communitarian ethics of sustainable development:
 - The ecological dimension: Adjusting human behaviour to the limits of nature
 - The global-equity dimension: Accommodating the "essential needs of the world's poor"
 - The generational dimension: Accommodating the just needs of future generations







Time past: Overcoming path-dependency:

- •Documenting through evaluative research the inherent barriers and inertia of institutions and procedures critical to achieving change for SD
- •Focusing on the crucial challenge of the Brundtland Report and Agenda 21 to change the "quality of economic growth" through technological innovation and social learning
- •Highlighting and disseminating "best practice" for SD (UN, OECD, EU)
- •Demonstrating the clear dependency of economic and technical steering instruments on historical, cultural and social conditions "path dependency"
- •The approach most systematically applied in: Lafferty and Ruud, *Promoting Sustainable Electricity in Europe: Challenging the Path Dependency of Dominant Energy Systems*, Edward Elgar Pub., 2008







Time present: Overcoming the dysfunctional practices of "competitive democracy":

- •The argument builds on a basic principle of social organization: "Form follows function"
- •The current dominant model of "Western"/"liberal-pluralist" democracy is a functional analogy of "free-market capitalism"
- •The model was first objectified by Schumpeter (1943) as "competitive democracy"
- Subsequently formalized and standardized by Robert Dahl as "polyarchy"
- Promoted actively during the Clinton administration as "market democracy"
- •Clearly documented as a "deep-structure" barrier to effective governance for sustainable development (e.g. Lafferty 2004, Meadowcroft, Langhelle and Ruud 2012)







Time future (1): Coming to grips with the ethical commitments of sustainable development:

- I. The ethics underlying the programme itself: Why does it warrant moral support?
 - As natural-law ethics: From Silent Spring through The Limits of Growth (I and II) to the IPCC and IPBES, natural scientists have "fronted" the SD project
 - As consensual ethics: The pressure of international decision-making: Consensual "Soft law" from Stockholm to Rio to Johannesburg – with strong aspects of "Hard law" from Brussels (Article 11 of the EU Treaty)
 - The Rio Earth Summit was a unique event in terms of:
 - the quality and detail of preparation (Agenda 21)
 - o the involvement and (original) commitment of the Western nations
 - the consensual adoption by representatives of 178 national and regional governing bodies







Time future (2): Coming to grips with the ethical commitments of sustainable development:

II. The ethics enunciated within the programme

- > The ecological dimension: Adjusting human behaviour to the limits of nature / "Science for sustainable development" / The "precautionary principle"
- > The global-equity dimension: Accommodating the "essential needs of the world's poor" / The issue of "overriding priority" in Brundtland / accepting "diversified responsibility" among "developed", "developing" and "under-developed" nations
- The generational dimension: Accommodating the developmental needs of future generations / adjusting all forms of community consumption to the norms of a family farm







Implications?:

- A critical understanding of the meaning of "time" is essential to the SD discourse
- ➤ This applies to both the "political" and "scientific" discourses on SD
- ➤ Both discourses are inextricably bound to the normative nature of the overall SD project
- ➤In either its generic political form (Brundtland, The Earth Summit, the EU SD Strategy)
- ➤ Or its more "objective" form (as "sustainability science")
- The concept of "critical time limits" is essential to the meaning and practice of both



Implications?:

- ➤ The crucial ethical question for the political discourse becomes:
- ➤ "How do we achieve effective governance for global sustainable development within the shortest possible time frame?" (so as to minimize both ecological degradation and unnecessary death and suffering from poverty)
- The crucial ethical question for the scientific discourse becomes:
- ➤ "When is the 'truth' of science strong enough vis à vis the sustainability of natural life-support systems to morally indict legally proscribe and sanction antisustainability actions?"



Status of the scientific discourse today?:

- ➤ Generally thriving
- ➤ High levels of interest and funding in both teaching and research
- ➤ New Master's and Doctoral programmes in "sustainability science" and "sustainable development" all over the world
- ➤ Increasingly strong drivers of investment in alternative technologies
- ➤ Increasing market shares for "green" products
- ➤ Emergence of a new "world leader" in sustainable-energy production and dissemination China
- ➤ A major universal trend in corporate advertising and branding
- ➤In short "Sustainability" is definitely "in"







Status of the political discourse?:

Much more negative. The UN-sponsored programme for promoting SD, has been seriously "stymied" (blocked, forestalled, checked) at the international, regional and national levels of implementation

>At the international level: A gradual "deconstruction" of the programme by the **United Nations**

- Losing touch with the Brundtland-Rio consensus (beginning already with the first 5-year SD summit in New York in 1997)
- Emasculating the programme and agenda for hindering climate change (offering the Kyoto Model for greater inclusivity in negotiations)
- Weakening the moral high ground of critical temporal urgency and collective political responsibility at the administrative peak of the UN itself (a conscious shift towards regionalism, bilateralism, and technological innovation)
- An increasingly politicized and potentially disastrous debate as to the validity and applicability of climate-change research







Status of the political discourse? (cont.):

- ➤ At the regional level: Shifting the balance of priorities within the European Union
 - An increased de-emphasis on the global equity dimension
 - An increased bias towards the economic and social dimensions of SD within the EU itself
- ➤ At the national level: Democratic politics as usual
 - A verbal-rhetorical commitment to over-riding SD principles and goals
 - A non-questioned dependency on the short-term cycles of "competitive democracy"
 - A resulting lack of effective steering mechanisms to implement political commitments







Summary points (1):

- Time is of the essence with respect to the SD programme
- The temporal challenges are different within the "political" and "scientific" discourses – but both are essentially normative
- ➤ While the political discourse has been increasingly stymied and deconstructed; the scientific discourse has grown more vital and consequential – both academically and technologically
- The temporal challenges for both the political and scientific discourses rest on the issue of "critical urgency".





Summary points (2):

- ➤ Are there "tipping points" in relation to both the "carrying capacity of nature" and the "capacity for effective governance" within the world system", or are there not?
- ➤ If there are no serious tipping points, either globally or regionally, we can then simply limp on, with both business- and politics-as-usual
- ➤If there <u>are</u> tipping points, however in relation to climate, biodiversity, water, food, and global inequality then the dysfunctional features of "competitive democracy" vis a vis the urgency of the SD transition must be addressed



Concluding reflections:

- ➤ There are clearly no easy answers
- ➤ But there are plausible procedures, with historical precedents and lessons
- ➤ The basic values and institutions of "competitive democracy" are not written in stone it just seems that way
- ➤ Constitutional reform was a defining procedure in the transition to "Western Democracy"
- ➤ Similar procedures can be employed again the relationship between "form" and "function" can be realigned to better facilitate the demands of sustainable development
- ➤ "Politics is" in the words of the renowned functional democrat, Otto von Bismarck "the art of the possible"





Summing up:

- ✓ Both the ethics and logic of implementation for promoting sustainable development have been seriously undermined since the peak of commitment at the Rio Earth Summit in 1992
- √The normative pressure of quasi-legal commitments by virtually all members of the United Nations at Rio is weakened
- ✓ The normative pressure of the single most-focused programme for achieving SD progress
 the principles and instruments The Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework
 Convention on Climate Change is both weakened and "in limbo"
- ✓The crucial mobilisation for action on climate change which was prompted by the Stern Report in 2006, and the Gore Oscar and Peace Prize with the IPCC in 2007, has been knocked off track by Copenhagen 2009 and shows no sign of revival as we move towards Mexico in November 2010
- ✓ Virtually all economic forecasts for the next 3-5 years indicate that the potential for prioritizing ecological concerns vis à vis economic and social-welfare concerns will be seriously weakened at the global, European, national and local levels of governance



Highlight ethical renewal:

- ➤ The issue of ethics and "moral pressure" are fundamental points of departure for "realizing" public policy
- ➤ We construct social reality through decision-making and "policy implementation" what is known in political science as "Speaking Truth to Power" (Wildavsky 1979)
- ➤ With respect to sustainable development, the problematic has been identified by the OECD and the European Environment Agency (EEA) as "political will" the most crucial variable for the realization of SD principles, goals, strategies and action plans
- ➤ In an earlier work (Lafferty 1996) I have identified two major ethical theories that provide "moral pressure" for SD: (1) the "consensus approach" and (2) the "natural law approach"
- ➤ Both of these normative foundations have been weakened during the years since Rio
- ➤ A n alternative approach "situational ethics" in a regional context *could* be a possible way forward

Promote democratic reform:

- A more fundamental problem than the economic and political insecurity undermining the SD programme at the global, European, national and local levels
- ➤ A basic incongruity between the dominant existing "form" of democracy "competitive democracy" (Schumpeter), "polyarchy" (Dahl), "market democracy" (Clinton) and the functional needs of SD. "Form follows function"
- ➤ A clear need to "re-design" the form by providing more "determinate" rules, procedures and institutions *to the advantage of SD* designing a better, more "instrumentally functional", relationship between SD "ends" and democratic "means"
- ➤ Initial attempts at identifying specific reform mechanisms have been made (Lafferty and Meadowcroft 1994, Lafferty 2000, 2004)
- The task can (and should) be pursued more explicitly in relation to both virtual (internet-based) and real (consensus conference) projects for "Democratic reform for regional sustainable development"
- A multi-disciplinary university programme on "Democracy, Energy and Regional Sustainable Development", can join the ethical-normative discourse with a scientific-technical discourse on energy innovation and practical implementation

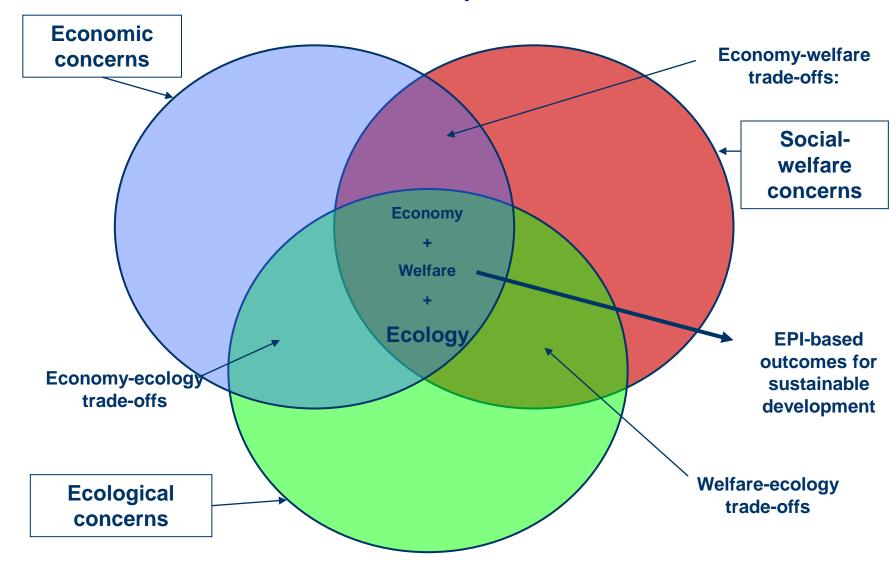


Apply principles for Environmental Policy Integration (EPI):

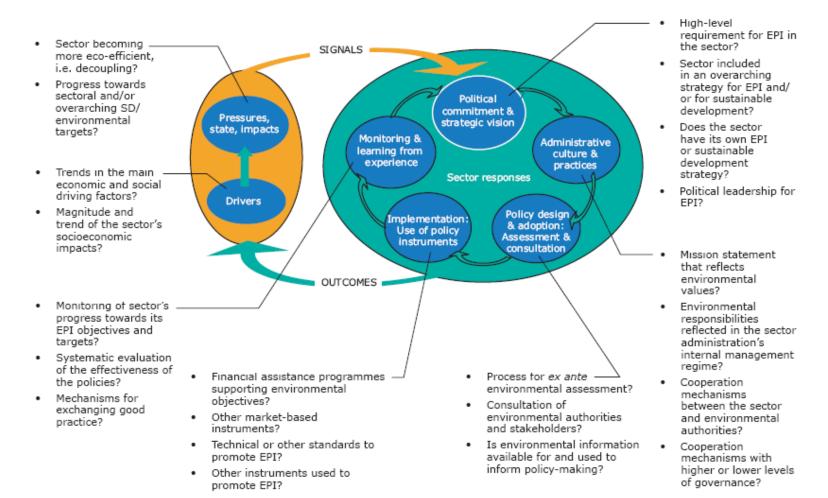
- ➤ EPI is a key governing instrument for achieving "de-coupling" of existing policy drivers (economic and social concerns) from ecological degradation (environmental concerns)
- ➤ An application of the concept is legally required by the Consolidated Treaty on European Union, "in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development" (Article 11)
- ➤ A great deal of research, both academic and applied, has been done on the concept in Europe (http://ecologic.eu/projekte/epigov/)
- >Several analytic and evaluative models have been developed
- ➤ The European Environment Agency (EEA) has established standards and guidelines for promoting EPI in governing institutions (EEA 2005a, 2005b)
- These, and other sets of principles and evaluative standards (Lafferty and Kundsen 2006), can be used as basic source materials for adapting and developing the EPI concept to initiatives for regional sustainable energy



The basic task of EPI is to resolve trade-offs among the three SD dimensions/pillars

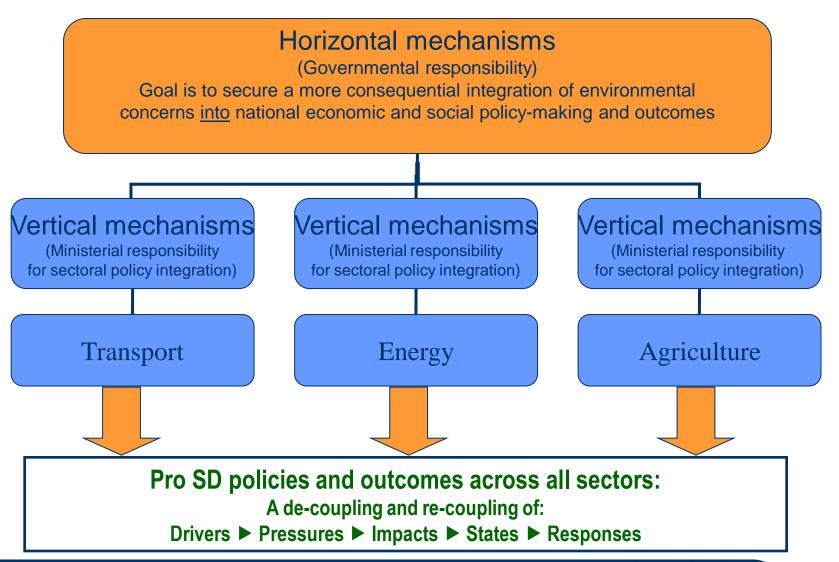


EEA Framework for evaluating EPI as sectoral policy





The Horizontal and Vertical Dimensions of Environmental Policy Integration





Benchmarks for vertical policy integration (VEPI): The responsibility of ministries

Scoping reports of sectoral activity identifying major environmental impacts associated with key actors and processes

Sectoral forums for dialogue and consultation with relevant stakeholders and affected citizens

Sectoral strategies for change, with basic principles, goals, targets and timetables

Sectoral action plans with specified initiatives for achieving goals with targetgroup related policy instruments

Green budgets for highlighting, prioritizing and carrying through action plans

Monitoring programs for evaluating implementation and revising strategies and action plans



Benchmarks for horizontal policy integration (HEPI): The responsibility of governments

A "constitutive" mandate providing principles and procedures for reconciling conflicts and trade-offs related to de-coupling and environmental policy integration

An over-arching strategy for SD goals and operational principles, and a political mandate for implementation with direct backing from the chief executive authority.

A national action plan with both over-arching and sectoral targets, indicators and time-tables.

A responsible executive body with designated responsibility (and powers) for the overall coordination, implementation and supervision of the integration process.

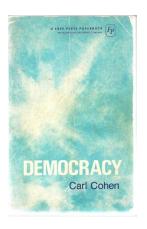
A communications plan stipulating sectoral responsibility for achieving overarching goals, and outlining how cross-sectoral communications are to be structured and made transparent.

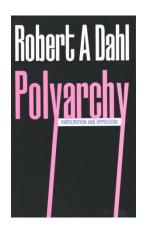
An independent auditor with responsibility for monitoring and assessing implementation at both governmental and sectoral levels, and for proposing revisions in subsequent generations of strategies and action plans

A board of petition and redress for resolving conflicts of interest between environmental and other societal objectives, interests and actors



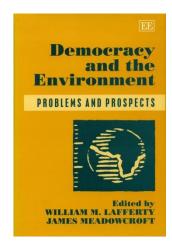
Relevant texts for democratic reform

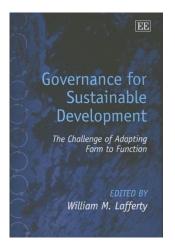












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