

Sustainable Development and Policy Integration – Some Conceptual Clarifications

- work in progress -

Abstract

The reasoning behind this paper is based on the identification of conceptual shortcomings of the meaning given to policy integration (PI) within the discussion on governance for sustainable development. Although PI is claimed to be a core element of sustainable development policies, the theoretical interlinkages between the idea of sustainable development (SD) and PI remain rather vague. These conceptual deficiencies are related to the interpretation of PI within the specific context of SD policies. Despite a constantly increasing amount of literature on PI, the discussion still lacks an adequate and analytically elaborated notion of *PI for sustainable development*, which has its theoretical and normative foundations in the idea of SD itself. The article aims at closing some of these conceptual gaps by clarifying the relationship between PI and governance for SD. My starting point is the assumption that the political idea of SD is at its core itself an integrative idea, which implies a specific mode of integrative policy making. Therefore, SD policies have to be conceptualised, analysed and evaluated as integrative policies. I further argue that the common paradigm of environmental policy integration (EPI) does not represent an adequate conceptual basis to analyse PI in the context of SD, since EPI is rooted in the idea of ecological modernisation but not in the SD discourse. Based on a critical review of the literature pertaining to EPI, an alternative notion of PI will be proposed and converted into a multidimensional analytical framework which explicitly focuses on structural, functional and procedural conditions of PI. Adapted to different institutional settings, this framework could be used for in-depth empirical analyses of efforts towards integrative governance for SD.

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Contents

1	Introduction	3
2	Integration.....	5
2.1	Basic meaning	5
2.2	Analytical differentiations: modes of integration.....	6
3	Sustainable Development as an integrative idea	8
3.1	SD as a contested concept	8
3.2	SD as integrative discourse	9
3.3	Integrative structure of the idea.....	11
3.4	Integration controversies	15
3.5	Résumé	17
4	Policy Integration	18
4.1	Diagnosis: Fragmentation of Policy Making System.....	19
4.2	Therapy: Idea and concepts of PI.....	21
4.3	Policy Integration – some critical remarks on the debate	24
5	Policy Integration for Sustainable Development.....	24
5.1	SD and PI – General Considerations	24
5.2	Sustainable development and EPI	25
5.3	Integrative Policy Making for SD – Contours of a Concept	31
6	Concluding remarks.....	38
7	References	39

1 Introduction

Since its popularisation by the Brundtland Report and the Agenda 21, the idea of sustainable development has evolved to a widely accepted model (“*Leitbild*”) of societal development. It has become one of the most dominant political ideas of the last two decades which shapes the political discourses on different levels and in different contexts. However, within the discussion on the political implementation of SD we can observe a shift: whereas the earlier debate was more about substantial goals and indicators of sustainable development, the recent discussion is more concerned with the question of policy making for sustainable development (Minsch/Feindt/Meister *et al.* 1998). This newer line focuses more on the institutional and procedural conditions of governance for SD. It is now a conventional wisdom that societal transformations towards sustainability are not confined to superficial organisational and substantial adaptations of politics and policies, but call for deep institutional changes of the society as a whole and the political system with its problem-solving mechanisms.¹ Therefore, the political realisation of the idea of sustainable development challenges the institutional configuration of the established political administrative systems. Policy outputs and outcomes in terms of sustainable development require different institutional and procedural conditions of policy making. But what kind of institutional and procedural conditions are required exactly?

According to a common line of argument, the challenges of sustainable development cannot be managed within the established problem solving mechanisms because they produce largely uncoordinated and unconnected parallel policies which have potentially contradictory and incoherent effects. Governance for SD, however, implies the treatment of complex problems as well as the balancing of economic, ecologic and social dimensions. In other words, there is a dysfunction between the established problem solving structures and processes and the requirements of the SD idea, which could be overcome by policy integration.² The concept of policy integration is not new, but has a long tradition particularly in environmental politics. In general, PI refers to the tight co-ordination of separated political activities in order to manage the interdependencies between them. The main purpose is to minimise negative external effects of policies upon each other.

Upon initial observation, one can see a renaissance of the older concept of policy integration within the newer discussion on sustainable development. However, a closer look at the literature on policy integration and politics for SD reveals that this new conceptual alliance seems to be hardly more than rhetorical. There are numerous political and scientific papers that emphasise the necessity of integrative policy making for sustainable development. Nevertheless, these pleas remain normatively and analytically underspecified. The particular meaning of PI in the

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

² Cf. Briassoulis (2004: 3), Schnurr/Holtz (1998), Wijkman (1999), Liberatore (1997), Lenschow (2002: 5pp.), Connor/Dovers (2004: 216pp.).

context of politics for SD remains rather unclear and vague. In other words, although it is widely agreed (upon) that PI is a core element of politics for SD, the question about how to conceptualise and analyse PI in the context of 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”.

These conceptual shortcomings are reproduced in empirical studies on governance for SD. 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). However, the analytical concepts in place do not fully grasp the function and performance of the integration efforts within institutional arrangements concerned with the shaping of SD policies. Thus far there are no theoretically sound approaches for the analysis and evaluation of integrative SD policies.

Against this backdrop, this paper aims to clarify the notion of PI for the particular discussion on SD. The central questions are: What could be a more adequate understanding of PI in the light of the SD idea? How can we think about policy integration in the context of SD in an appropriate way? How do we have to conceptualise and operationalise PI for SD? The principal objective is to sketch out the contours of a conceptual framework of PI for SD. Ultimately, if transferred to different empirical contexts this framework may serve evaluative as well as prescriptive purposes.

The argumentation will proceed in accordance to the following 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 integration (part one) and sustainable development (part 2). These conceptual clarifications serve as a basis to (re-)frame the concept of PI for the context of SD. My underlying assumption is that a more appropriate notion of PI for SD should be linked theoretically to the SD idea itself. Therefore, in the second part, I will attempt to derive some requirements concerning PI by re-interpreting SD in terms of integration. The third section provides an overview of the discussion on PI by examining the concept’s general meaning and sketching out different conceptions. Taking account of these conceptual remarks, the fourth part elaborates on the particular relationship between PI and SD. It outlines the abstract contours of a concept of PI for 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. Finally, in conclusion, I will outline some empirical research perspectives and questions, which are part of my dissertation project.

2 Integration

Within this chapter I explore the notion of integration by asking for the essential meaning of the word and pointing out some basic analytical differentiations, that may be of help in further discussion.

2.1 Basic meaning

Like many other social scientific concepts, integration does not have a universally fixed and agreed-upon meaning. Integration is one of those words, which has lost its shape and precise meaning in day-to-day use (Bergmann 1995: 213). Already a cursory look at 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). These connotations also reveal that the concept is mostly used in a normative sense. Integration appears to be something desirable: the more of it, the better. However, this “cryptonormativity” disguises integration as an empirical phenomenon. A clear-cut clarification of the word is further complicated by the fact that the notion is used in different social scientific sub-disciplines as well as within different theoretical contexts (Nohlen 1995: 278). This variety is also made more apparent by several opposing concepts such as differentiation, disintegration, fragmentation, segregation, assimilation, cooperation, conflict. Although there is *prima facie* no single definition of integration, it could, nevertheless, be illuming to search for the conceptual core of the word in order to guide the search for a range of different meanings. The search for unity may sharpen the mind’s awareness differences. Therefore, in the remainder of this section I attempt to explore the abstract conceptual core of integration and point out some analytical differentiations.

According to the philosophical dictionary by 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 three definitions reveals that they are based upon the same essential elements. They make statements about a non-integrated *initial state*, an integrated *final state* and a mediating *integration process*. Accordingly, integration appears both, as a state and a process. Referring to ability, Nohlen’s definition explicitly points to a functional dimension of

integration. However, with regard to the concrete shape these basic elements can take, the definitions remain unspecific and open up a range of possible 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. These different processes 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. The final state is characterised as wholeness, unity, unified whole, or, less specifically, some larger unit. 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. Furthermore, the definitions do not inform us about qualitative modifications of the elements and the integral whole. The question as to whether an integrated final state's properties (functions etc.) differ from those of the disintegrated initial state remains open. 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 Herbert Spencer, this structural change results in a decreased movability of the integrated elements 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 generally conceptualised as a process or a state of the amalgamation of separated parts. Within this process the movability of the parts is diminished, and subsequently, the recognisability of the whole is enhanced in relation to that of the components. However, with regard to the initial state, the process, and the end state, we can distinguish several types of integration. Subsequently, I will suggest some abstract analytical categories to structure the pluralism 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, two alternative scenarios are possible. 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 we call it total integration. In this latter state the single parts are no longer movable and, hence, are no longer perceivable as parts at all. In contrast, a particularistic final state is characterised by still movable and perceivable single parts. This distinction is not supposed to reveal that integration is a gradual phenomenon, which has to be described in terms of

integration degrees. However, the bipolarity underscores the assumption that integration does not unavoidably entail the unification of parts and the dissolution of their identities.

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 the relating of parts proceeds as one-sided penetration entailing that one part is unilaterally constraining the 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 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. We do not recognise the initial parts in the final state any longer. Obviously, an absolute integration is at the same time transformative. Therefore, the distinction conservative vs. transformative refers only to partial forms of integration.

The previous conceptual remarks should have made clear that integration is a rather unspecific umbrella term covering a range of very different phenomena and conceptions. However, there is 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. Initial and end-state differ with respect to their structure. The process of integration can be described as structural change: a process that (re-)relates different, previously separated parts with each other. Although this process 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 different categories may serve as an analytical framework to grasp and describe various integration phenomena and understandings. They illustrate once again – and herein lay the critical point of the conceptual clarification – that there is no single notion of integration. Instead, integration appears as a concept that has to be specified for 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 crypto-normative usage of the concept, propositions have to be derived explicitly from normative assumptions or empirical observations.

3 Sustainable Development as an integrative idea

Having examined the concept of integration, we now turn to the idea of SD, which will serve as a normative and theoretical reference point for a concept of PI. My assumption is that we have to derive the specific conceptual requirements for PI from the SD idea itself in order to develop an appropriate notion of PI for SD. Therefore, the following section reinterprets SD in terms of integration by asking the question: In what sense is SD an integrative idea?

3.1 SD as a contested concept

Trying to explore the integrative requirements of the SD idea we face the problem of a broad and somewhat chaotic discourse. Theoretically oriented scientific approaches stand opposite to programmatic-political concepts of SD (Tremmel 2003). Both are related partially and sometimes merge (Voss 1997).

On an abstract level we can identify some basic normative core elements of the SD idea as well as a specific discursive structure which differs from other environmental discourses.³ However, beneath this discursive identity there is a large heterogeneity in the existing conceptions and semantics. Accordingly, there is no unambiguous definition of SD. Instead, SD appears as a contested concept (Holland 2000, Jacob 1996, Jacobs 1999). These 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:

“Democracy, liberty, [...] social justice for example, all have readily understood ‚first level’ meanings. We

³ John Dryzek explicitly discusses the SD discourse 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 (cf. Carter 2001: 198). Unlike other environmental discourses, SD refers not only to the conservation of nature. On the contrary, it draws its specific discursive identity from the reframing of the relationship between nature conservation, economic development and social justice. Whereas other environmental discourses assumed a mutually exclusive relation between these three dimensions, SD takes a positive relation for granted. Compared to other environmental discourses SD appears as a comprehensive idea of societal development, which comprises social, ecological and economic dimensions (Arts 1994).

know what the subject is when we use these terms, there are no other terms expressing the same set of core ideas, and even people holding widely different interpretations of them can agree on the evaluation of (necessarily extreme) situations in which democracy, liberty, [...] social justice are *not* present.” (Jacobs 1999: 25)

The contestation appears on the second level of meaning and refers to concrete conceptions for implementing the general concept (e.g. specific 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, my emphasis). The SD idea represents a contested concept in that sense:

“Its first level meaning is now given [...], the core ideas are fixed and cannot now be changed through rational argument. Rather, attention needs to focus on the second level. Here there *is* a battle for the ‘meaning’ of sustainable development.” (Jacobs 1999: 25-26, cf. Dingler 2003)

What are the consequences of this contestedness for the analysis of SDs integrative core? How do we have to cope with the dual structure of the idea? I suggest taking contestedness as given and regarding it as a constitutive element of the discursive identity itself. Hence, we have to “read” integration on both levels independently. This is done in the remainder of the chapter. First, some very general principles for integration are derived from the rather uncontested first level meaning of the concept. Then, the second level’s contestedness is approached by scrutinising different conceptions of SD with respect to their integrative requirements. Before that, I will make some short remarks on the development of SD to yield a better understanding of its specific structure and identity.

3.2 SD as integrative discourse

The idea of SD did not evolve in a historical vacuum (cf. Elliott 2001: 10). Moreover, we can interpret its emergence as a process of discursive integration, in which previously separated discourses on environment and development merged into a new discourse (Stickler/Eblinghaus 1996: 17). Accordingly, SD was not an invention in the true sense of the word (Grober 2002, McNeill 2000). The new thing about SD is the linkage and unification of isolated normative values and positive symbols (Dryzek 1997). It was the Brundtland-Commission who finalised this discursive integration process that had been emerging since the early 1970s. 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). The notion of SD

“appeared to offer a way out of the ‘growth versus environment’ polarity, which typified environmental debate during the 1970s and early 1980s. It suggested that it was not a question of a choice between environmental protection and social advance, but rather a problem of selecting patterns of economic and social development compatible with sound environmental stewardship” (Meadowcroft 2000: 371).

However, this discursive integration may not be explained sufficiently by contingent historical processes. To a considerable extent, it is the result of political bargaining and compromises. 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). Already the title of the report (“Our *Common Future*”) as well as the headlines to the single chapters (“*Common Concerns*”, “*Common Challenges*” and “*Common Endeavours*”) reveals the commission’s intention “to transcend differences, construct shared understandings, and build a winning coalition for reform” (Meadowcroft 2000: 371).

Consequently, the commission’s work was characterised by the balancing of conflicting interests and the search for compromise:

„On the one side were environmentalists, who argued the limits or no-more-growth position to meet the thread of pollution, protect natural resources, and respect the rights of future generations. On the other were representative economists, especially of the Third World, who argued the need for development and more growth, to alleviate poverty in the present and to make it possible for these nations to play their proper role in international affairs. The Brundtland report bridging of these conflicting interests was to propose neither simply development, but *sustainable development*.” (Mitcham 1995: 317)

Finally, the notion of sustainable development was created as a formal compromise that constructed win-win-scenarios between environmental and economic interests as well as between the industrial and development countries:⁴

„The notion was one which could appeal to countries of both North and South – reflecting growing environmental awareness in the former, and the urgent development concerns of the latter.“ (Meadowcroft 2000: 371)

Therefore, SD is not just the result of a discursive integration process. At the same time it functions as an integrative discourse which transcends and reframes established differences and conflicts in addition to creating new discourse coalitions (Hajer 1995):

„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).

This discursive integration serves as a background condition of politics for SD by constituting a new symbolic repertoire for the description of the world. It shifts the established patterns of problem perception and sets of values, brings new actor constellations and new cleavages for conflict (Brand 1997: 9). Within the new discourse, the political communication is changing⁵: the selective perceptions of the previous separated discourses are delegitimised. Old patterns of argumentation as well as story lines are dissolved and are replaced by new ones. The new discourse integrates by semantics: it (re-)defines opportunities for agenda setting and limits the freedom of political communication (Hellmann 2004: 196).

⁴ 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).

⁵ Regarding the potential impact of discourses cf. Dryzek (1997: 5, 18fp.). “Beyond affecting institutions, discourses can become embodied in institutions. When this happens, discourses constitute the informal understandings that provide the context for social interaction, on a par with formal institutional rules. Or to put it slightly differently, discourses can constitute institutional software while formal rules constitute institutional hardware” (Dryzek 1997: 19).

3.3 Integrative structure of the idea

As the preceding part demonstrates, the evolution of the SD idea can be interpreted as a process of discursive integration. The following part focuses on the outcome of this process. My thesis is that integration serves as a basic principle shaping the inner structure of the SD idea. After some remarks on this inner structure I will outline, how this inner structure can be interpreted in terms of integration.

Asking “what is sustainability?” one might mainly receive answers that emphasise 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 limited 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 the phenomena, their causes and effects, that are perceived as problematic (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. In sum, 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 parts“ – within this 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 SDs (uncontested) integrative core refers mainly to the BR for this document clearly takes a central position within the SD discourse as a whole. Its publication not only initialised 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). Within the limited space of this paper I am not able to elaborate my argument in full detail as I have done it elsewhere. Instead, I will confine my explanation to the main points.

3.3.1 *The 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. Hence it can be characterised as an anthropocentric idea⁶ 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:

⁶ „Our Common Future starts with people“ (Adams, cit. in Lafferty/Langhelle 1999: 5).

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).⁷ On a second layer this rather abstract principle is converted into more concrete, but still general area-specific goals relating to environmental, economic, and social spheres (ibid: 50pp.). 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 being itself is a precondition for economic development, has become paradigmatic for this assumption. Such hypotheses systematically help to dissolve conflicts between apparently conflicting interests by creating political win-win-situations.

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 very 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)

SD aims at a just distribution⁸ 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. In other words: a certain development qualifies 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 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” (Lafferty/Langhelle 1999: 3, my emphasises). This differentiation implies that

⁷ The BR explicitly differentiates between a sustainable and a normal development (Di Giulio 2004: 47). Whereas a normal development aims at satisfying human needs and wants on the short run, sustainable development is directed at securing the satisfaction of human needs of all present and future generations worldwide.

⁸ For an in-depth discussion on the relationship between SD and justice cf. Dobson (1998).

SD mutually integrates different spatial layers. Hence, a development pathway contributing to a just distribution on the local level may not be called sustainable if 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.⁹

On a more abstract level the normative core SD can be described as an integrative ethical principle that links 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: “[W]hile individually most of them have been expressed and supported before, they have not previously been put together into a single phrase or concept” (Jacobs 1999: 27). At least according to the BR these values and goals are interrelated functionally. The idea’s normative core consists of a comprehensive and distributive justice integrating different time horizons and spatial layers. Although the BR has been criticised particularly for its assumptions concerning the functionality of goals (Lélé 1991), the basic integrative structure of its normative system – the connection of inter-generational and intra-generational justice as well as the comprehensive system of environmental, economic, and social goals – can be assumed to be widely accepted. There are hardly any SD conceptions which fall behind this minimal consensus.

3.3.2 *Integrative world view*

SD is not just a normative idea, but stands for a particular perception of social-ecological realities. Discursively constructing the world in a specific way, SD also enfolds a diagnosis of its crisis. The discursive frame consists of assumptions about items in the physical world („basic entities whose existence is recognised or constructed“) as well as of „assumptions about natural relationships“. ¹⁰ As one basic building block of SDs reality construction Dryzek identifies “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)

⁹ „While patterns of consumption may be unproblematic in a national perspective – with respect to both the requirements for basic needs and for physical sustainability – they may not hold in a global perspective” (Lafferty/Langhelle 1999a: 224).

¹⁰ These are two of four categories (“questions to ask about discourses”) introduced by Dryzek to analyse and compare the symbolic structure of environmental discourses. The elements within these categories represent the construction material of the discursive story lines (Dryzek 1997: 16).

societal and ecological spheres: „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).

The motif of nestedness serves as a central conceptual frame for the diagnosis of the world’s problems. These 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

“[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)

One of the report’s basic premises is that economic, social and ecological problems are mutually conditional and cross spatial layers (DiGiulio 2004: 36). Local problems sum up to global crises, whereas global problems directly or indirectly impact on the local. This specific construction of objective interdependencies („assumptions about natural relationships“) also forms the conceptual background against which the BR creates win-win-scenarios between the various goals and interests of economic development, environmental protection and satisfaction of needs (Dryzek 1997: 130).¹¹ Although the BR has been criticised much for its diagnostic reductionism (Lélé 1991), the general pattern of interdependent problem complexity has become a basic motif of the SD discourse rendering inadequate any selective approaches to problem analysis and solving. Since the BR we are facing 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 economic development are not given in the long run. Therefore, it is a necessary condition for SD to stay below them. Limits imply that the “movability” of societal development is confined to a certain finite space. Thus limits act as integrative factors.

In sum, SD stands for a specific construction of social-ecological reality constituting a

¹¹ Exemplary for this new view on societal problems are the BRs remarks on the linkages between poverty, economic development and environmental degradation: According to the commission, environmental degradation causes *and* results from poverty. On the one hand the overuse of natural resources diminishes the possibilities to satisfy basic needs. On the other hand, poverty furthers the exploitation of natural resources and, therefore, environmental degradation. Economic development appears as a precondition for relieving poverty and thereby as a condition for environmental protection. However, at least on the long run, economic development itself depends on an intact environment. It can only be sustained if it takes place within particular carrying capacities of ecological systems. 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).

background condition for the diagnosis of typical SD problems. The „new“ problem pattern is characterised by two motifs: first, the interconnection of multiple spatial layers as well as complex interdependencies between different societal and ecological spheres (“nested systems”) and second, the existence of limits confining SDs opportunity space. Both motifs suggest that SD has to take place within a multidimensional space which is open („nestedness“) and closed (“limits”) at the same time and restricts the movability of societal development. According to this world view, SD appears as a spatially, temporally and sectorally “integrated” developmental pathway of society.

After all, SD appears as multidimensional idea that restructures and reframes the field of environment and development with respect to integration. In cognitive-conceptual terms the reframing points to the global-local shape of problems, the systematic interconnection of ecological, social, and economic conditions as well as the potential finiteness of societal development (cf. Brand/Jochum 2000: 174). 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

In the post-Brundtland years we can observe a considerable differentiation of the debate on SD resulting in a broad variety of political and scientific SD conceptions (Baker/Kousis/Richardson *et al.* 1997: 5). Within this controversial debate different worldviews, values, and interests, as well as different notions of society and nature are negotiated and summed up in more or less coherent conceptions of SD (Brand/Jochum 2000: 12). The attempt to grasp the discourse’s inner structure is complicated not only by the field’s own heterogeneity (Dingler 2003: 194), but by an increasing amount of approaches attempting to bring order into the field.¹²

Of particular prominence is the distinction of ecological and socio-ecological positions (Mazouz 2003: 239). Both are based on conceptions framing SD in terms of areas, dimensions, pillars or columns. However, they differ with respect to both the relative weight of single areas as well as the relation among the areas. Whereas ecological conceptions are devoted to the conservation of

¹² With respect to their respective origins Mebratu identifies “Institutional Versions”, “Ideological Versions” and “Academic Versions” of SD (Mebratu 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 (Pearce 1996) identifies ecoentric and anthropocentric SD concepts as ideal types. Dobson (1998) differs between three basic conceptions of SD (“Critical Natural Capital”, “Irreversible Nature”, and “Natural Value”). From a discourse theoretic perspective Dingler recognises a hegemonic and various marginalised discourses (Dingler 2003). Tremmel differs between “political” and “scientific” conceptions (Tremmel 2003). Arts (1994) reconstructs four strands of the SD discourse: “Business as usual”, “Green Economy”, “Integral Sustainability” and “Anti-modernism”. Jacobs refers to the distinction of “radical” and “conservative” conceptions of sustainable development (Jacobs 1999: 38). According to Baker *et al.* there are four ideal type levels of SD: a “treadmill-approach”, approaches of “weak” and “strong sustainability” as well as an “ideal model” of SD. (Baker *et al.* 1997: 8pp.). A similar typology is provided by O’Riordan (1996), who distinguishes four steps of SD: “very weak”, “weak”, “strong”, and “very strong” SD.

nature and therefore prioritise the ecological dimension¹³, socio-ecological conceptions aim at balancing the different areas.¹⁴

The more theoretical economic controversy between weak and strong sustainability refers to the structure of a “fair bequest package” for future generations (Neumayer 1999, Ott/Döring 2004, 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 the conceptions with regard to their underlying understanding of integration. Due to the limited (but already exceeded) space this cannot be redone here in detail. However, the main result is that these conceptions entail different mutually exclusive concepts of integration. Strong sustainability, for instance, goes hand in hand with a partial understanding of 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 the particular notion of integration depends on the respective conception of SD. Different conceptions imply different meanings of integration. I further assume that the respective notion of integration frames the political integration task and, therefore, the basic understanding of PI in a specific way: It does make a difference in institutional as well as procedural terms whether PI for SD relates to a symmetric or asymmetric understanding of integration, to a concept of partial or total integration. Against this backdrop, there is no unequivocal answer to the question of how we can think about PI in the context of SD. The answer varies with the underlying conception of SD. Accordingly, the assumption of a „straight-forward-relationship” between SD and PI has to be refused. How can we cope with this heterogeneity of potentially differing conceptions of integration? 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 contestedness as an essential property of the SD discourse. Following the latter path of “non-decision”, contestedness itself becomes an initial point for thinking about an appropriate conception of PI for SD.

Contestedness points to the essentially political dimension of the idea, to the ambivalence of its incorporated values and goals, to the ambiguity of its worldviews and problem constructions as well as to its inherent dynamic and particularism. The idea’s inherent openness, ambiguity and dynamic imply that SD is not a universally and finally definable state, but a continuing process of change that, on the one hand, calls for a persistent adaptation of its normative and cognitive fundamentals, and, on the other hand, involves the active participation of all societal forces

¹³ Particularly relevant for the German discussion is the study “Sustainable Germany” of the Federal Environmental Agency (UBA) (1997), the report “*Zukunftsfähiges Deutschland*” compiled by BUND/Misereor (1996), as well as the contributions of the German Advisory Council on the Environment (SRU 1994, 2002).

¹⁴ For the German discussion cf. the final report of the Enquete Commission “*Schutz des Menschen und der Umwelt*” (1998) as well as the integrative approach developed by the Helmholtz Association (Kopfmüller/Brandl/Jörissen *et al.* 2001, Jörissen/Kopfmüller/Brandl *et al.* 1999).

(Biesecker 2002). Therefore, the contestedness on the 2nd level works as a corrective to the universal appeal of the idea's normative and causal claims on the 1st level. However, these claims are not called into question per se, but are complemented by the assumptions of ambivalence, ambiguity and uncertainty. Contestedness works as a disintegrative moment by increasing the movability of options concerning SD, and, thus, becomes itself a requirement for re-integration.

3.5 Résumé

Finally I would like to sketch out some basic integrative requirements concerning politics for SD. For the moment, these requirements have to remain on a rather abstract level. But they will be further specified in the next chapter. I start with some general functional remarks on politics for SD and then refer again to the integrative structure of SD.

Firstly, 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 politics for SD appears as a complex inter-temporal, inter-spatial, and inter-systemic ordering task: It is about ordering the relationships between present and future generations, within and between national societies, between different societal areas as well as between society and its natural environment.

Secondly, SD integrates the notions "limitation" and "movability" as well as "conservation" and "change" constructing the 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).

Thirdly, SD essentially means integrated development. Sustainability represents an integrative frame limiting the movability of pathways for societal development with respect to the dimensions time and space. 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. Vice versa, the future generations' developmental pathways are constrained by the necessity to achieve intra-generational justice in the present. Limitations with respect to the dimension of space emerge from the motif of spatial interdependencies in connection with the normative principle of international justice. Together they imply the reciprocal limitation of different societies' developmental pathways in order to allow for sustainable development world wide.

Against this backdrop, politics for SD appears as integrative endeavour directed at limiting free floating developments.

The SD idea's integrative structure implies integration efforts with regard to various dimensions. The integrative system of values implies that politics for SD does 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 in the sense of their common optimisation. The constituent simultaneousness of inter- and intra-generational justice implies the interlinkage of short-term and long-term development perspectives. Therefore integrative politics for SD have to be based on comprehensive and integrated decision premises.

15

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. 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.

Finally, SD requires integration in a methodological sense. The conceptual contestedness of the idea, 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 can be interpreted as integrative challenges for the political system. These characteristics imply that politics for SD cannot be based on fixed, temporally and spatially universal and stable substantial problems and reference points. Moreover, politics for SD has to define its own conceptual frame as well as its objectives and normative reference points. From this point of view politics for SD is about the mutual relation of different values, goals and problem perceptions in order to form 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

This chapter gives an overview of the concept of PI. After clarifying in which contexts PI is

¹⁵ „[W]e can no longer afford to ignore the larger context in which decisions about our development are made [...]. Two centuries ago, humans could perform most of their analyses on a relatively small scale (e.g. a single generation on the family homestead). In pre-industrial societies decision makers (kings, parliaments, local chiefs) had a limited impact, in the long term, on the daily life of the population. Today the picture has changed; population growth and technology have dramatically increased the level of connectedness of the hierarchy; and, therefore, also the scale of integration has to be increased“ (Giampietro 1994: 624).

used and why claims for PI arise, the second part examines what PI actually means by depicting some analytical categories. The chapter concludes with some remarks on shortcomings of the discussion on PI.

4.1 Diagnosis: Fragmentation of Policy Making System

PI appears in political as well as in scientific contexts, where it is mainly used as a normative and prescriptive concept. Sometimes, but far more seldom, PI is applied in an empirical-analytic sense as an approach to describe and to explain real-world phenomena. Policy integration is often demanded but rarely analysed empirically. As Lange and Schimank (2004: 13) point out with regard to social integration, claims for integration are not made until integration has actually failed. Hence, integration is called for as soon as the order has eroded and disintegrative effects have occurred. Successful integration, on the contrary, does not attract anyone's attention. Assuming that this is also true for PI, the question arises, what kind of integration problems are supposed to be addressed by PI.

The concept of 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, if at all, are found to be only loosely related to each other. Instead of a well ordered policy system one recognises single separated and freely moving policies. A paradigmatic diagnosis concerning the under-integration of policies and its consequences 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)

One basic motif of under-integration diagnoses are “external effects” (cf. Underdal 1980, Rowe 2000, Briassoulis 2005b: 17). According to this common line of argumentation, political decisions within in one policy sector usually are not very precise, but induce unexpected side effects in other policy fields:

„A wide variety of sectoral policies turn out to have unexpected and often unwanted [...] consequences (or externalities) that were not taken into account in the process of policy-making.“ (Meijers/Stead 2004: 1)

These side effects are different in nature: They can be direct or indirect, one-sided or reciprocal. They can affect the way other policies actually work and, thereby, decrease or even increase their effectivity and efficiency. Side effects can also generate new problems in a neighboured policy field and induce additional demands for political intervention (Rowe 2000: 207).

A second motif of disintegration diagnoses refers to an insufficient problem solving capacity. The established policy system appears to be inappropriate 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 [...]. Their systemic nature renders causal relationships indeterminate and direct, single-purpose policy interventions ineffective.“ (Briassoulis 2004: 2-3)

Both motifs, external effects and inappropriate problem solving capacities, are two sides of the same coin. They refer to the same basic problem of an inadequate projection of real world complexity within the policy making system's structure and processes.¹⁶

The policy system's under-integration has its roots in the existence of separated arenas of policy production. 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 narrow way. This selectivity stems from limited cognitive capacities, partial interests, different normative beliefs and evaluative criteria, selective rationalities, incomplete knowledge, and so on. As a consequence, political decisions and their effects are not reflected comprehensively, but only from the vantage points of the problem perceptions, rationalities and goals of the involved actors and organisations. However, these separately generated and uncoordinated policies do not only hamper effective solutions for comprehensive problems (motif 2) but bring about mutual externalities (motif 1).¹⁷ Both motifs, by emphasising problems of efficiency, effectivity and coherency, point to shortcomings regarding the rationality of political problem solving that are due to the fragmentation of the policy system. But why is this type of fragmented policy making *politically* precarious at all?

There are at least three answers to this question. First, from a policy perspective, a fragmented policy making system impedes (on) the problem solving function of the political system as a whole. The ongoing production of externalities results in an increasing demand to solve the problems generated by the policy system itself. An increasing amount of the available resources is exhausted by self-generated problems, instead of being used to solve societal problems. As a consequence there is an overload of the political system's problem solving capacity.

The second answer is linked to the first one. From a polity perspective the disintegration of policies appears as a problem of political order and legitimacy. Within the complex theory of democracy (Schmidt 2000: 294pp.) a decreasing problem solving capacity of the policy system goes hand in hand with a diminished output-legitimation. Against this backdrop the fragmentation of the policy making system may entail problems of democratic legitimacy. A similar conclusion can be drawn applying a systems theory perspective. Inefficiencies and ineffectivities within the policy system may be interpreted as a deficient transformation of "supports" and "demands" into "decisions" and "actions". Demands are not adequately satisfied

¹⁶ According to Jordan this can be described as „[m]ismatch of institutions to problems“ (Jordan 2002: 52). The BR depicts the „institutional misfit“ as follows: “The integrated and interdependent nature of the new challenges and issues today contrasts sharply with the nature of institutions that exist today. These institutions tend to be independent, fragmented, and working to relatively narrow mandates with closed decision processes. Those responsible for managing natural resources and protecting the environment are institutionally separated from those responsible for managing the economy. The real world of interlocked economic and ecological systems will not change; the policies and institutions must“ (WCED 1987: 310).

¹⁷ „[Policies] are not discrete, disembodied events whose impacts occur in isolation from other policies. On the contrary, policy decisions are interlocked making it increasingly difficult for one policy area to ignore and function independently of other areas“ (Briassoulis 2005b: 37).

whereas supports are wasted. A political system which works ineffectively or, in an extreme case, does not produce anything at all will not be supported on the long run.

Third, from a politics perspective, the fragmentation of policy making processes 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 the government. All aspects potentially diminish public support and therefore 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 normative order and stability as well as the allocation and distribution of power within it.

4.2 Therapy: Idea and concepts of PI

Against this background, what is expected of the policy integration? Generally spoken, PI is an answer to the deficient order of the policy making system: “[Policy Integration] is needed to hold the policy system together, to overcome its tendencies towards disorder, and to manage the numerous policy interconnections” (Briassoulis 2004: 13). Therefore, PI represents a repairing mechanism, which aims at managing 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 substantial interdependencies within the system of policy production. In other words: PI is about constructing interconnections on an interaction level within the system of policy production in order to manage interdependencies on the level of substantial policy impacts. 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, which produces efficient and effective solutions to political problems. PI aims at reconciling the various different and partially contradictory functions of single organisations or the state as a whole in order to restore the unity of politics.¹⁸

Without a doubt this mainstream understanding of PI rests on the ideal of a comprehensively rational policy making (cf. Rowe 2000, Underdal 1980). PI itself appears as an approach to rationalise problem solving by increasing the quality of solutions as well as their efficiency and effectivity: „Policy integration, in the broadest sense, ‘adds value’ to policies while economising on resources.“ (Briassoulis 2005b: 2)

However, PI is anything else but a unitary concept. Even the notion itself is not very common in

¹⁸ This is implied by notions like „holistic government“ (Buck/Kraemer/Wilkinson 1999).

the literature.¹⁹ PI rather is an umbrella term integrating a range of various concepts with different origins. 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), “holistic government” (Buck *et al.* 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” (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.). However, even with different accents and emphasises, all of them refer to the issue of a disintegrated problem solving system and are directed at increasing the coherency of policies and, therefore, the effectivity and efficiency of the policy making system as a whole. Instead of exploring any single conception in detail, I subsequently present some basic analytical categories in order to sort the field’s heterogeneity. At the same time they serve as conceptual reference points for the further discussion.

4.2.1 *Object of integration: policies*

One may expect that PI approaches would yield a conceptualisation of their object that means an understanding of policies. However, a closer look reveals, that the literature is rather unspecified regarding the notion of policies.²⁰ This may be explained by the inherent complexity of policies as well as the ambiguity of the notion of policy.²¹

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 (cf. 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.).²² Whereas inter-policy integration aims at making different policies mutually coherent,

¹⁹ „Studies on policy integration, and the term itself are rather uncommon in the academic literature. Consequently, policy integration should be regarded as a relative frontier of knowledge.” (Meijers/Stead 2004: 12)

²⁰ For an exception cf. Briassoulis (2005c).

²¹ According to Persson policy is a „slippery object to integrate” (Persson 2003: 10).

²² For a contradictory application of these notion cf. Jänicke (2004: 318) and Lafferty (2004: 204pp.).

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.

4.2.4 Degrees of integration

Another differentiation of empirical phenomena as well as conceptual approaches refers to the degree of PI. According to the OECD (1996) “policy co-ordination” and “policy integration” represent different levels of inter-policy cooperation. These levels differ with respect to the intensity of interaction processes as well as their output. Policy integration involves more intensive interactions than coordination but achieves probably more ambitious outputs. Whereas policy co-ordination is restricted to diminish contradictions among policies, policy integration entails a common, trans-sectoral policy. Consequently, policy integration appears as procedurally and institutionally more ambitious:

“[Policy integration] is more demanding for the stakeholders involved in the process. In general policy integration requires more interaction, accessibility and compatibility, leads to more interdependence (and also follows from more interdependence regarding the issue at stake), needs more formal institutional arrangements, involves more resources, requires stakeholders to give up autonomy and is more comprehensive in terms of time, space and actors.” (Meijers/Stead 2004: 5)

However, although a differentiation of integration degrees generally makes sense, the gradual distinction between integration and coordination appears as problematic for integration is itself a gradual phenomenon. As I pointed out above, integration is not restricted to a specific state of complete unification, but comprises phenomena of different qualities. Moreover, integration and coordination are not mutually exclusive, but refer to different categorical layers. Coordination describes a specific interaction oriented mode of integration. Even the highest degree of integration may involve coordination activities. Therefore, the relationship between integration and coordination has to be determined empirically.

Besides this rather problematic approach, there are several more comprehensive typologies referring explicitly to degrees of policy coordination (Metcalf 1994, Jordan 2002). They differentiate between eight or nine levels of coordination reaching from complete autonomy,

communication, consultation and management of conflicts up to forms of highly-centralised and encompassing coordination. However, a typology that explicitly relates to degrees of PI is still missing.

4.3 Policy Integration – some critical remarks on the debate

In sum, the discussion on PI takes place in a multidisciplinary field and is characterised by a quite abstract general meaning of the word on the one hand and conceptual heterogeneity on the other hand. It is remarkable that PI is not – as might be suggested by the notion itself – a central concept within policy analysis.²³ Instead, 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 of PI (Halpert 1982, Hanf/Scharpf 1978, Meijers/Stead 2004). However, 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 differentiation are given away, and a crypto-normative usage of the concept is fostered.²⁴ 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 preceding conceptual remarks on Integration, SD, and PI. After some general considerations on the relationship between SD and PI, I examine the notion of “environmental policy integration” (EPI) that represents a specific PI concept, which has gained particular prominence within the debate on politics for SD. In the last part an alternative approach of thinking about PI in the context of SD is presented.

5.1 SD and PI – General Considerations

What can be said about the general relation between PI and SD thus far? For what reason is PI assumed to be a core element of GSD at all? Both concepts, SD as well as PI raise normative prescriptive claims. Both ideas stand for specific diagnoses of deficiencies as well as

²³ This can probably be explained by the fragmentation of policy analysis itself. Empirical policy research focuses rarely on several policies at the same time or, even more seldom, on interdependencies between different policy fields. Instead, policy research reproduces the boundaries between policies, which are defined politically.

²⁴ „[P]eoples ways of seeing policy integration depend on their goals” (Holtz 1998: 285).

therapeutical approaches. SD is an answer to unsustainable developmental pathways of societies whereas PI replies to the fragmentation and disintegration of the policy system. There would be a systematic connection between both concepts, if we could show that both diagnoses are interlinked, that means, if unsustainable development is rooted in the pattern of disintegrative problem-solving or vice versa. At least the first of both possible relationships is widely mentioned in the literature: SD problems result from negative externalities of separately produced policies (cf. OECD 2001, 2002a: 9pp.). Insofar, the disintegrated policy system does not only appear as inappropriate with regard to the *solution* of complex SD problems, but is also responsible for their emergence. The causal relationship between the pattern of fragmented policy making and the unsustainability of societal development also suggests a functional relationship of PI and SD as prescriptive approaches. Thus, PI is not only a concept to overcome the disintegration of the policy system, but also to overcome patterns of unsustainable development.

Furthermore, there are similarities between both concepts with respect to their particular problem diagnoses and solution approaches. Both concepts refer to complexity and interconnectedness and aim at bringing into order interdependencies. Whereas PI is supposed to order the policy system by relating previously independent policies, SD is about the integration of multiple societal development pathways by ordering complex temporal, spatial, sectoral, and social interdependencies taking account of particular normative principles. Assuming that the ordering of the policy system contributes directly or indirectly to the ordering of societal development, there is a tight connection between the respective therapeutical programs of SD and PI. According to these preliminary considerations, the general PI idea of managing interdependencies between policies in order to control external effects and bring about adequate solutions for complex problems appears to be in line with the idea of SD.

Nevertheless, both concepts – and this is another connection line – are rather vague and unspecified. Policy integration as well as SD comprises heterogeneous conceptions. Therefore, we are again facing the question, how the general notion of PI can be specified for the context of SD. The subsequent chapter refers to one particular strand of discussion which places PI explicitly in the context of politics for SD: environmental policy integration. It will be discussed, if this concept represents an adequate specification of PI for the context of SD.

5.2 Sustainable development and EPI

5.2.1 The discussion on EPI

As sketched out above, PI is discussed in a variety of different contexts. However, of particular prominence is the discussion on PI in the field of environmental policy (Briassoulis 2005b: 1).²⁵

²⁵ Briassoulis states that “[s]ince the 1980s, most definitions [of Policy Integration, B.B.] found in the literature refer to EPI [...] as the impetus for intensively researching PI came with the heightened interest in the

There is an on going scientific and political debate on “environmental policy integration” (EPI) since the beginning of the institutionalisation of environmental policy (Müller 2002, Jänicke/Jörgens 2004).

It is widely accepted²⁶ that environmental protection is a cross-sectional issue. 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. Hence, pursuing environmental goals only within a sectorally oriented environmental policy appears not to be appropriate. Moreover, environmental issues have to be considered within all policy sectors. Contrary to traditional approaches focusing on symptoms control an integrated environmental policy reduces environmental pollution at their source (cf. Weale 1992: 122, Hertin/Berkhout 2003: 41pp.). During the 1990s the discussion on EPI has gained new relevance and dynamic: first, in the course of the „Cardiff-Process“, that is directed at furthering the integration of environmental objectives in the EU’s sectoral policies²⁷ and second, within the theoretical and practical discussion about politics for SD.²⁸ The latter debate refers to EPI as a central element of SD. 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).

5.2.2 *Conceptions and definitions*

Although the necessity of EPI is widely agreed upon and in spite of an increasing amount of conceptual contributions²⁹ and empirical studies³⁰ on EPI the essential meaning of the concept remains unclear (cf. Hertin/Berkhout 2003: 40). There are as many different definitions as analytical and prescriptive approaches. Accordingly, Persson states that „the concept [...] has not been exhaustively elaborated or clarified in the policy-making community but remains a rather elusive principle open for divergent interpretations” Persson 2003: 10). Subsequently, two prominent conceptions of EPI are sketched out and analysed with regard to their understanding of integration as well as to their relation to the SD idea.

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 various conceptual remarks on EPI.

environmental repercussions of economic activity and the pursuit of sustainable development” (Briassoulis 2005b: 23).

²⁶ According to Jordan it is a „conventional wisdom [...] that the environment must be an integral part of other policy areas“ (cit. in Lenschow 2002: 4).

²⁷ Cf. Buck/Kraemer/Wilkinson (1999), Briassoulis (2005b: 19p.), Lenschow (2002: 9pp.), Kraack/Pehle/Zimmermann-Steinhart (1998).

²⁸ Cf. Connor/Dovers (2004), Liberatore (1997), Persson (2003), Lenschow (2002a: 5pp.), Lafferty (2004).

²⁹ Cf. Collier (1994), Liberatore (1997), Hertin/Berkhout (2003), Lafferty/Hovden (2002).

³⁰ Cf. Hey (2002), Buller (2002), Lafferty *et al.* (2004), Lafferty *et al.* (2002), Hertin/Berkhout (2003), Stead (2003), Collier (1994).

According to Jänicke, EPI is directed at internalising responsibilities for environmental protection in all problem causing policy sectors (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 appears as the consequent implementation of the “polluter pays principle” that aims at reducing environmental impacts at their sources instead of pursuing end-of-the-pipe approaches. Such an integrative strategy is assumed to be not only 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). Jänicke frames EPI as a substantial policy approach directed at the ecologicalisation of policy fields and their associated economic sectors. Integration is conceptualised as one-sided activity: Policy fields and sectors have to incorporate environmental objectives and to straighten their activities along these new goals. 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, Hervorhebung B.B.)

In contrast to Jänicke’s concept this notion exhibits an explicitly normative „bias“. According to Lafferty/Hovden, EPI does precisely not imply the balancing of different goals, but a principled prioritisation of environmental objectives:

„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)

Accordingly, Lafferty/Hovden frame EPI as a unidirectional integration activity supposed to incorporate environmental objectives into the policy making processes of all policy sectors. With respect to the principled prioritisation EPI appears as an asymmetric integration activity. Lafferty/Hovden relate their concept explicitly to the idea of SD. However, due to the hierarchal understanding of integration, their conception appears to be compatible only with SD conceptions, which themselves entail the prioritisation of the ecological dimension.

This short examination of two prominent conceptions of EPI may have given an impression of the field’s conceptual heterogeneity. There are (apparently) value-neutral approaches directed at rationalising environmental policy and the policy making system as a whole (Jänicke) as well as

explicitly normative oriented approaches, which are directed at readjusting the normative structure of the policy system (Lafferty/Hovden). The differing purposes go hand in hand with different understandings of integration. The rationalisation approach presupposes a balance between environmental and sectoral objectives and thus is based on a symmetric integration concept. Against this, the normative conception requires the principled prioritisation of environmental goals and therefore rests on a hierarchal notion of integration.

Although Lafferty/Hovden's definition refers explicitly to the idea of SD they promote a rather narrow conception of ecological sustainability. Jänicke's conception of EPI doesn't refer to SD at all, but is rooted in the broader strategy of ecological modernisation.

5.2.3 *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 stating that

„if environmental factors are not taken into consideration in the formulation and implementation of the policies that regulate economic activities and other forms of social organisation, a new mode of development that can be environmentally and socially sustained in the long term cannot be achieved“ (Liberatore 1997: 107).

However, a closer examination of different conceptions shows that there are at least superficially rhetorical connections between EPI and SD. The references to the “mother concept” remain rather loose and weak. Moreover, 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 constituent element of SD. Against this backdrop the question arises, whether there is a systematic relationship between EPI and SD at all (Briassoulis 2005b: 34pp.). Is the concept appropriate with respect to the integrative SD idea? The following remarks are based on the conceptual discussion on SD and integration provided in the first chapter.

The core idea of EPI is to integrate environmental objectives in various sectoral policies (cf. Hertin/Berkhout 2003: 40). However, regarding the aims and purposes of integration there are different conceptions in place. Some authors expect EPI to rationalise environmental policy and political problem solving as a whole. According to other authors EPI is supposed to readjust the political systems value set and normative balance. Following the latter interpretation, EPI principally prioritises environmental objectives over those of the respective policy sectors. This conception implies an asymmetric understanding of integration. Thus it is only compatible with conceptions of SD which themselves are based on a symmetric notion of integration. Contrary to this, rationalisation approaches assume a balance between ecological and other objectives. They aim at optimising sectoral policies with respect to their environmental impacts. Prima facie, these conceptions are based on a symmetric notion of integration and therefore appear compatible with balancing conceptions of SD. In general, different conceptions of EPI appear to be compatible with different conceptions of SD.

However, on a more abstract level concerning the direction of integration activities, EPI approaches display a uniform understanding of integration. EPI is conceptualised as unidirectional activity aiming at the integration *of* environmental objectives *into* other sectoral policies and, therefore, a one-sided adjustment of policy sectors along environmental requirements.³¹ This one-sided relation of policies rests on a hegemonic notion of integration. My thesis is that this hegemonic concept of integration is not sufficient with respect to the comprehensive idea of SD as sketched out in the preceding chapter. The unidirectional injection of environmental concerns into sectoral policies supposed to avoid ecological externalities appears at best appropriate 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 motif. 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.³² 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 problem dimensions as well as the comprehensiveness of SDs integrative value system.

According to Briassoulis EPI has to be rejected for the following reasons:

„The 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.“
(Briassoulis 2004: 13)

However, from my point of view she misses the actual point. Firstly, it is not the case that a broader conceptualisation of SD per se 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 automatically 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 contestedness the question of prioritisation appears as a socio-political issue that

³¹ This hegemonic conception of integration is particularly expressed by Young (2000: 11) using the notion „injection“ to describe EPI.

³² Similar Briassoulis: „The focus on EPI has overshadowed, however, other concerns. For example, in addition to environmental repercussions, sectoral policies have spatial, social, cultural and other interdependent repercussions“ (Briassoulis 2004: 9).

cannot be resolved *by definition*. Therefore, the prioritisation of the ecological dimension is not actually a problem even with respect to a broad concept of SD as far as it is legitimately chosen by society. The true problem 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. It should have become clear that, in contrast to EPI, the integrative idea implies a an extensive as well as reciprocal understanding of PI

5.2.4 From EPI to PI for SD

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 EPIs selective and one-sided understanding of integration appears as 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 contrasts the differences between EPI and a comprehensive notion of PI for SD, which will be further elaborated in the following chapter.

Figure 1: Comparison of EPI and PI for SD

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

In the following part I will propose an alternative way of thinking about PI for SD by sketching out the contours and basic dimensions of a general concept for the analysis and evaluating of PI in the context of SD. My assumption is that, with respect to the three basic dimensions of integration, we have to specify PI for SD in terms of its functions, its basic structure, as well as its procedural characteristics. The concept will be developed from a “design perspective”. This means that I attempt to make reasoned remarks on how the policy making system is supposed to be constructed and managed in order to fulfil the integrative requirements of SD. Consequently, I sketch out a kind of an ideal model (“*Idealtyp*”) that may serve prescriptive as well as empirical-analytical purposes. After pointing to some underlying assumptions concerning SD policies, I present the main features of PI for SD by referring to functional, structural, and procedural integration dimensions.

5.3.1 Basic assumptions

The concept is based on the notion of SD outlined in the second chapter. Accordingly SD is understood as a comprehensive idea of societal development. Although the idea claims to be universally valid, it is, nevertheless, a contested idea and, therefore, political idea, that has to be interpreted within different historical and cultural contexts.³³ Both, the idea’s integrative basic structure (normative core and worldview) as well as its conceptual ambiguity and inherent dynamic constitute central initial points for the development of an adequate PI concept. This framing of SD as an integrative but “open” idea renders inadequate a substantial notion of PI: We cannot think about PI in terms of a fixed, substantively defined goal or system of goals from which we can derive discrete and specific strategies and measures for integration (cf. Holtz 1998: 290pp.). Instead, PI for SD has to be conceived of as an inherently dynamic concept comprising a procedural dimension.

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 policy does not relate to any clear cut real world object or functional societal sphere. Hence, SD policy can not be thought of as just another policy field among others, but refers to various established policy areas. In fact, SD policy can be conceived of as integrating different separated policies. It appears as a *meta-policy* directed at arranging and maintaining order within the policy system. Therefore, SD policy entails PI *per definition*. PI is not merely a core element, but a constitutive feature of politics for SD. PI is not just a strategy within a broader concept of politics for SD. Instead, politics for SD necessarily requires integration of policies. In other

³³ According to Dobson “[s]ustainability is, it seems a universal doctrine by definition: it makes no sense to be in favour of sustainability and not to want it universalized” (1998: 218). At the same time SD is a particularistic concept, However, “[t]he particularity, or context-sensitive, aspect of sustainability lies in its application, not in its prescriptive range; that is to say that its implementation is likely to be coloured by particular circumstances, but the normative guidance for implementation will be of universal reach” (ibid.: 218).

words: Who wants to get SD must provide PI. However, PI for SD cannot be thought of as integrating and ordering the policy system in an arbitrary way. Rather, the SD idea itself provides particular requirements specifying PI in functional, structural and procedural terms.

5.3.2 *Functional dimension*

What are the purposes and functions of PI in the context of SD? Subsequently, it is argued that SD specifies the functions of PI for SD in two ways. Firstly, SD assigns a particular functional position to an integrative SD policy within the entire policy making system. Secondly, it defines the specific functions of policy integration for SD.

The overriding aim of politics for SD is to establish conditions for sustainable development within different societal and natural spheres. It is directed at the construction and continuous adaptation of societal development pathways that take into consideration their own limits. SD policy relates various societal development pathways and integrates them within an overarching, temporally, spatially, sectorally as well as socially comprehensive framework. SD policy adopts a synoptic perspective on various functional areas, spatial layers, as well as time horizons in order to relate separately proceeded but interdependent developments and re-adjust them according to the normative idea of sustainability.

As pointed out above, SD policy can not be thought of as a policy field in a traditional sense for it does not refer to any single functional sphere or societal area. Its objects are not policy-specific problems, but policy-transgressing socio-ecological complexes of problems. Hence, SD policy is not so much directed at governing single societal sectors, but at coordinating and ordering the policy system with respect to SD. In this sense, SD policy is supposed to manage various distributed governing activities. Both, its policy-transgressing reference area as well as its encompassing policy-related coordination function, render SD policy an integrative meta-policy³⁴ representing a frame of integration in two respects: Firstly, the frame (SD policy) itself is constituted by other policies and, therefore, appears as the result of an integration process. Secondly, the frame integrates policies by establishing interconnections and limiting their movability with respect to the idea of SD. Hence, SD policy is not just an integrated policy, but also an integrative policy by definition.

What are the particular functions of such an integrative SD policy? First of all, one purpose of PI for SD is the rationalisation of the policy making system. Like the general concept of PI, it is directed at reducing unwanted external effects between policies as well as enhancing the ability to cope with complex, policy-transgressing problems in an effective and efficient manner. Nevertheless, PI for SD differs in some ways from this mainstream function of PI.

PI for SD is not only supposed to minimize externalities within the existent policy system, but to consider more comprehensively the impacts within encompassing spatial and temporal horizons.

³⁴ 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“.

Hence, 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 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 normative core, SD does not provide us with a universally valid system of values and substantial goals that may guide 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 interpretive openness implies that an integrative policy for SD has to establish and specify permanently its own normative and empirical reference points. All together, these ambitious functions shape a specific conceptual understanding of PI that has relevant repercussions on the basic structure of PI for SD.

5.3.3 *Structural dimension*

Subsequently the structural dimension of an integrative SD policy is described by taking into consideration the analytical differentiations derived from the exploration of the notion of integration and the integrative SD idea. The proposed conceptual features represent basic structural requirements toward institutional arrangements concerned with the making of SD policy.

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. Against this backdrop, there is *prima facie* no policy that has no relevance for SD at all. Therefore PI for SD refers to a comprehensive set of policies and differs from PI conceptions, which relate single policies selectively. The requirement of 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 generally required from 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. PI is a constitutive element of politics for SD as a whole. Accordingly, we cannot think of PI as a punctual and 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 entire unification of policies or are

they supposed to remain relatively autonomous? The preceding considerations yield a rather ambiguous picture. On the one hand SD policy appears as an integrated meta-policy which is constituted by (still) separated policies. On the other hand SD functions as an integrative meta-policy and therefore has to be able to limit the movability of the connected partial policies.

My thesis is that an integrative SD policy requires a high degree of integration of policies, but does not entail their complete unification. Hence 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 *overintegration*.³⁵ An integrative policy for SD, though, faces the challenge to handle a high degree of complexity. This appears only possible by referring to the advantages of a 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 the potential policy-transgressing problems of SD.

As the discussion on EPI revealed, PI as unidirectional infusion approach proves to be insufficient for the context of SD. Against the backdrop of a normatively comprehensive SD idea and its diagnosis of complex interdependencies a concept of PI for SD has to enable reciprocity. Such a notion of reciprocal inter-policy integration is *prima facie* 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

The reciprocal integration of policies not only serves to produce a coherent policy system which is free of contradictions. As sketched out above, an integrative SD policy is even more ambitious. It is directed at exploring policy-transgressing problems and exploiting common decision options. In this point it differs from approaches whose intention is to rationalise the system of existent policies without re-adjusting the integrated parts themselves. Coherency alone does not guarantee that problems are processed according to SD. Rationalisation therefore appears as necessary but sufficient condition of an integrative SD policy.

The integrative SD idea implies the re-framing and re-construction of existent problems and

³⁵ Overintegration means a too stark limitation of the integrated parts' degrees of freedom, whereby the integrated parts lose their particular identities. Overintegration 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.).

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 a re-shaping of policies themselves. Such an understanding differs from conservative notions of PI whose intention is 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 within a system of integrated policies? 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, that cannot be pointed out here, my thesis is that we cannot derive from the SD idea any a priori statements about the relative position of different policies within an integrated policy system for SD. Whether one policy has to be systematically prioritised is a value question which cannot be determined 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 for SD by applying a highly abstract and aggregated notion of policy (“policy fields”) and integration. This understanding of policies and PI alone is not sufficient for a comprehensive conceptualisation of an integrative SD policy for it systematically neglects the procedural dimension of PI. However, this procedural dimension of PI seems to be essential for several reasons.

Firstly, as we have seen, SD is a contested concept. This contestedness suggests that – beneath an uncontested but rather abstract meaning of the word – there are no generally valid normative conceptions of SD in place which could serve as universally applicable blueprints for problem-solving. Therefore SD is a normatively ambivalent concept that has to be adapted and modified according to particular historical and socio-cultural 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 something about the basic problem structure as well as some general problem characteristics. The SD idea 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. All in all, the actual definition of what exactly qualifies as a SD problem is rather contingent. However, in order to cope with this dynamic and contingent character of SD problems we have to apply a dynamic notion of policy integration. PI in this sense can be conceptualised as integrative policy making or integrative problem solving. This shift to a process perspective implies a less abstract and aggregated understanding of policies. Instead of policy fields we now talk about single policy programs and their making. Then PI does not mean the integration of existing policy fields, but the *ab initio* integrated production of policy programs. But how can we conceptualise integrative policy making? Without going into details here, I will only sketch out the main features.

In general, we can frame policy making in two ways. First, from a problem oriented perspective, policy making appears as substantive problem solving referring to objectively given real world problems, which are (ideally) analysed and solved according to the best available knowledge. Second, from an interaction-oriented perspective, policy making is more about social interaction processes between actors with different problem perceptions, normative and causal beliefs. Policy making for SD has to cope with some fundamental problem characteristics within both dimensions. Within the first dimension complexity and uncertainty appear as critical factors. From the second perspective, the main difficulties of policy making for SD 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. However, rendering it more concrete and illustrative, these dimensions can be related to a (rather simple) process model, according to which political problem solving involves two steps: problem definition and problem solution.

5.3.4.1 Integrative problem definition

As pointed out above, SD presupposes integration already 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“, which refer to a commonly shared perception frame and are characterised by substantially comprehensive analyses.

Substantive-analytical integration (complexity)

SDs integrative world view implies analytical integration efforts to grasp the substantive complexity and nestedness of real-world problems. *Substantive-analytical integration* aims at understanding and depicting real-world nested systems as well as complex cause-effect-relations within them. The resulting problem analyses are characterised by the systematic consideration

and mutual relation of the “objectively given” spatial, temporal, sectoral and social multidimensionality of problems.

Cognitive-conceptual integration (ambiguity)

The requirement of cognitive-conceptual integration accrues from the general assumption according to that 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 means that SD problems have to be essentially constructed by referring to various dispersed problem perceptions which have to be mutually related and integrated within an overarching and comprehensive problem frame.

5.3.4.2 Integrative decisions

Integrative decisions are based on normatively as well as 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, which 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. Normative integration means the constitution of a comprehensive set of mutually related goals and decision criteria by referring to legitimate societal values as well as to the abstract normative core of SD.

Knowledge integration (uncertainty)

A comprehensive system of goals increases the demands for reflecting and assessing decision impacts. Decisions 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. In other words: the expansion of the normative reference frame necessarily entails that the cognitive basis of decision-making is extended as well. An integrative assessment of decisions particularly gains relevance with respect to the motif of “limits”. The existence of “carrying capacities” and “critical loads” demands that decision impacts have to be assessed synoptically and cumulatively. However, the complexity and inherent dynamics of socio-ecological problems as well as SDs constantly moving normative and conceptual fundamentals renders this a rather complicated endeavour characterised by essential uncertainties. Therefore,

integrative decisions have not only to include 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 that refer to the comprehensive assessment of potential social and substantial impacts within various time horizons and spatial layers as well as to inherent uncertainties.

5.3.5 *Résumé*

Applying a comprehensive notion of SD and PI, the relationship of governance for SD and PI has to be conceptualised in three dimensions. First, in a functional sense, PI for SD appears as an integrative meta-policy, which represents an overarching frame for ordering and arranging previously separated partial policies. Second, SD specifies the basic structure of an integrated policy system. This structure is characterised by extensity, reciprocity, transformativity, particularity. The third dimension of a comprehensive notion of policy integration refers to policy making processes for SD. These can be conceptualised as a specific pattern of integrative problem-solving.

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.

6 Concluding remarks

The overriding aim of the paper was to sketch out an adequate notion of PI for SD. I argued that a concept of PI for SD has to be theoretically linked to the integrative requirements of the SD idea itself. After clarifying the general notion of integration, I reinterpreted 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 understandings of integration at the level of conceptions. 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 SDs 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 further specified and operationalised with respect to different empirical application contexts.

7 References

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