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Energy Policy and Sustainable Development on the European, National and Regional Level

Confronting the challenge of increasingly dysfunctional modes of multi-level integration and democractic governance

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Two major approaches to sustainable development:

- ***The Political Discourse***: Initiated by the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED: The Brundtland Commission, 1983-1987), and carried through politically by the UN, EU, OECD, etc.

- ***The Academic Discourse***: Initiated by academics subsequent to the publication of the Brundtland Report in 1987 - mainly critical, and mainly British.

- There is considerable overlap between the two discourses – but also considerable conflict between them as to:
  - the desirability and legitimacy of the political discourse
  - the "correctness" of the Brundtland understanding of SD within the political discourse.

- While the political discourse seeks consensus and practical results within a *context of applied science and governance* – the academic discourse pursues consensus and change within a *context of critical academic science*

The concept of sustainable development within the political discourse: The Brundtland Report, Rio Principles, Agenda 21, etc

"Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.
It contains within it two key concepts:

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

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

+

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

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

STRATEGIC RESEARCH FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The prevailing logic of the post-Rio pursuit of sustainable development, climate regulation and the preservation of biodiversity

I. Pursue SD goals through internationally sanctioned “soft-law” regimes (Agenda 21, Climate and Biodiversity Conventions)

II. Recognize the principles of “burden-sharing” and “diverse responsibility” among “developed” and “developing” nations, rich and poor, north and south

III. Focus the ethical nature of the project: Create moral pressure for action and results by stressing:

- The unanimous support of UN member-states for the Rio Accords: consensual ethics;
- Growing pressure from natural scientists as to the “the carrying capacity of nature” and “limits for growth”: natural-law ethics
- Principles of both intra-generational and inter-generational equity: the ethics of equal entitlement

IV. Coordinate strategies, action plans and protocols through multi-level governance and democratic decision-making at the global, national, regional and local levels of responsibility

Crucial factors undermining the prevailing logic and system for SD implementation

I. The goal of pursuing SD goals through internationally sanctioned "soft-law" regimes (Agenda 21, Climate and Biodiversity Conventions)

- Undermined from the outset by critical academics:
  - "Sustainable development is a fudge."
  - "It is not the "best"/"most correct" way to pursue ecological balance."
  - "It doesn't recognize the need for zero growth."
  - "It is simply social democracy in a new and deceptive guise."
- Undermined "from within" the UN system:
  - Prevailing conflicts between UNEP, UNDP and the Commission for Sustainable Development.
  - Weakening of the commitment to Agenda 21 – introduction of the "Millenium Goals" in 2000 and a heightened (more diffuse) profile for "business partnerships" in Johannesburg.
  - A gradual shift away from SD and Agenda 21 towards the issue of Climate Change.
- A huge investment in time and resources to achieve the Kyoto Protocol: Referred to as "The only game in town" – flawed in its instruments; only partially supported; and lacking the most significant emitters
- The Copenhagen fiasco: a near-total neglect of Kyoto, with no serious prospect of achieving a more effective international agreement.

Crucial factors undermining the prevailing logic and system for SD implementation (cont.)

II. Recognizing the principles of "burden-sharing" and "diverse responsibility" among "developed" and "developing" nations, rich and poor, north and south

- Gradually undermined by:
  - Continuous non-performance from the wealthiest northern countries
  - Continuous corruption and internal conflicts in countries of the south – particularly in Africa
  - A growing critical consensus as to well-documented problems with multi-lateral and government-to-government developmental aid
  - A gradual shift in the aid profile: from the "promotion of growth" and addressing the "essential needs of the world's poor", to Clean Development Mechanisms (CDMs) and other quota-related climate-change reduction schemes
  - Increasing conflict among southern and northern constellations of countries as to the nature of climate-change impacts in general, and the responsibility for compensating impact costs in developing countries
  - Specific recent decreases in development aid by northern countries as a direct result of the growing global economic crisis

Crucial factors undermining the prevailing logic and system for SD implementation (cont.)

III. Focusing the ethical nature of the SD project: Create moral pressure for action and results by stressing:

- The unanimous support of UN member-states for the Rio Accords: "consensual ethics";
- Growing pressure from natural scientists as to the "the carrying capacity of nature" and "limits for growth": "natural-law ethics"
- Principles of both intra-generational and inter-generational equity: the "ethics of equal entitlement"

- All three ethical dimensions have been undermined by the factors outlined above:

  - A general weakening of the United Nations (globalization of the economy and the Bush anti-UN policies)
  - A specific weakening of "sustainable development" and "Agenda 21" as core aspects of the UN implementation strategy for the Rio Accords
  - A further narrowing of the SD agenda to focus on climate change: The Stern Report and Nobel Peace Prize for Al Gore's Powerpoint
  - An increasingly politicized debate as to the general scientific basis for UN/EU-driven climate-change initiatives
  - A general failure to maintain the "principled priority" of "environmental concerns" vis à vis trade-offs with "economic" and "social" concerns
  - An overall failure to achieve mobilization and implementation along either the within-generational ("essential needs of the world's poor") or cross-generational (rights of future generations) ethical dimensions of sustainable development

Crucial factors undermining the prevailing logic and system for SD implementation (cont.)

IV. Coordinating strategies, action plans and protocols through multi-level governance and democratic decision-making at the global, national, regional and local levels of responsibility

- Seriously undermined, at all levels, by the growing financial-economic crisis:

(1) At the global level:

- The process of globalization as primarily a programme for disseminating free-market capitalism and "competitive democracy" has seriously "stalled"
- A move from "Globalization" and "The End of History" towards "Protectionism and the Resurgence of National Interests"

(2) At the supra-national and national level in Europe:

- Dramatic financial/economic threats to the very existence of the European Union
- Significant cut-backs in public-sector expenditures at the national level
- Growing unemployment, potential deflation and social conflict and disruption
- Increased support for extremist political parties, both ultra-nationalist and ultra-liberalist (free-market populism)

Crucial factors undermining the prevailing logic and system for SD implementation (cont.)

IV. Coordinate strategies, action plans and protocols through multi-level governance and democratic decision-making at the global, national, regional and local levels of responsibility

- Seriously undermined, at all levels, by the growing financial-economic crisis:

  (3) At the local administrative level:

  - Local governments are increasingly showing their “age” and “path-dependency” : No longer “parishes” or “cantons”
  - No longer legalistic “regulators” of diverse sustenance economies: farming/forestry/fishing
  - Increasingly decision-making arbiters and service-providers of economic and social-welfare “goods”, with an “overload” of responsibilities and an “underload” of financial resources
  - Increasingly dysfunctional with respect to ecological degradation and sustainable development: governing according to “lines on a map” rather than ecological inter-dependency
  - Responsible for governing and administrating a globally driven, short-term “culture of wants” – to the increasing detriment of a regionally dependent, long-term “culture of needs”

Summing up:

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

Conclusion?

Pretty dire and depressing stuff!

- **Marx, Lenin and Mao are definitively dead;**
- **Adam Smith, Friedrich Hayek and Morton Friedman are also dead (but won't lie down);**
- **Gro Harlem Brundtland and Al Gore are on sick leave;**
- **. . . and the rest of us aren't feeling too good either!**
- **In short, ...**

Our Common Future:

Is receding . . .

into . . .
??????????????????????

What to do?

- **"Look to the Regions": establish viable models for SD governance**

How to do it?

- **Highlight ethical renewal: work to revive and strengthen normative "pressure" for SD through "situational ethics" in a regional context**
- **Promote democratic reform: "Form follows function", and current "forms" of democracy are not serving the "functional requirements" of sustainable development**
- **Focus on energy: go to the driving force of socio-technical change**
- **Apply principles for Environmental Policy Integration (EPI): a key steering instrument for achieving SD goals**

"Look to the Regions":

- The only level of potential SD action which is currently not in serious political-economic trouble
- Thus a level with strong regenerative, "bottom-up" potential for the SD programme
- A level sadly neglected by the EU – but with an institutional apparatus in place: The Council of the Regions
- A level which the University of Graz consistently has focused on in SD-related research (Lafferty and Narodoslawsky 2003)
- A trans-boundary level (and concept) which resonates with sub-national and trans-national populations across the world (See the REGIONET project website: http://www.iccr-international.org/regionet/)

Highlight ethical renewal:

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

Promote democratic reform:

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

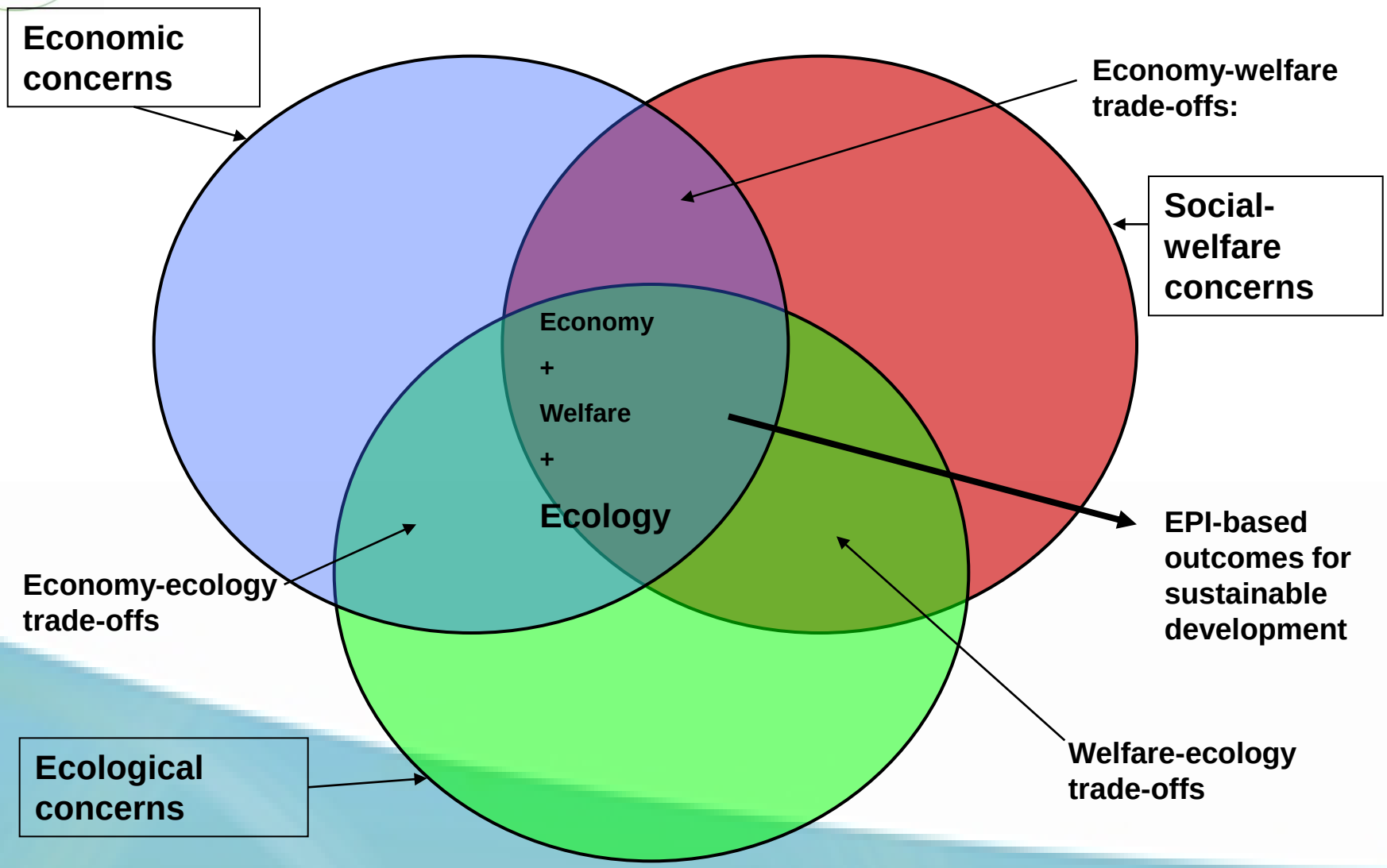
Focus on energy:

- The single most crucial issue for promoting sustainable development as put forth in the Brundtland Report and adopted at Rio
- Widespread agreement within the European Union on ambitious goals and targets for increased shares of “renewable energy sources” (RES)
- But major problems in both promotional efforts and monitoring by the European Commission (Lafferty and Ruud 2008)
- “Contextual analysis” and “path dependency” are critical supplementary approaches to existing “dominant techno-market models” for promotion of (RES)
- The EU’s “top-down” and standardized approach – with an emphasis on national targets and initiatives – tends to miss vital developments, and potentials, at the regional level
- Existing national support schemes will be seriously affected by the economic downtown and public-sector cuts
- There is very little probability that any decision on climate-change in Mexico 2010 will seriously improve the prospects for RES deployment
- Regions can – and ethically should – develop develop independent, politically committed, covenants and programmes for sustainable long-term energy solutions

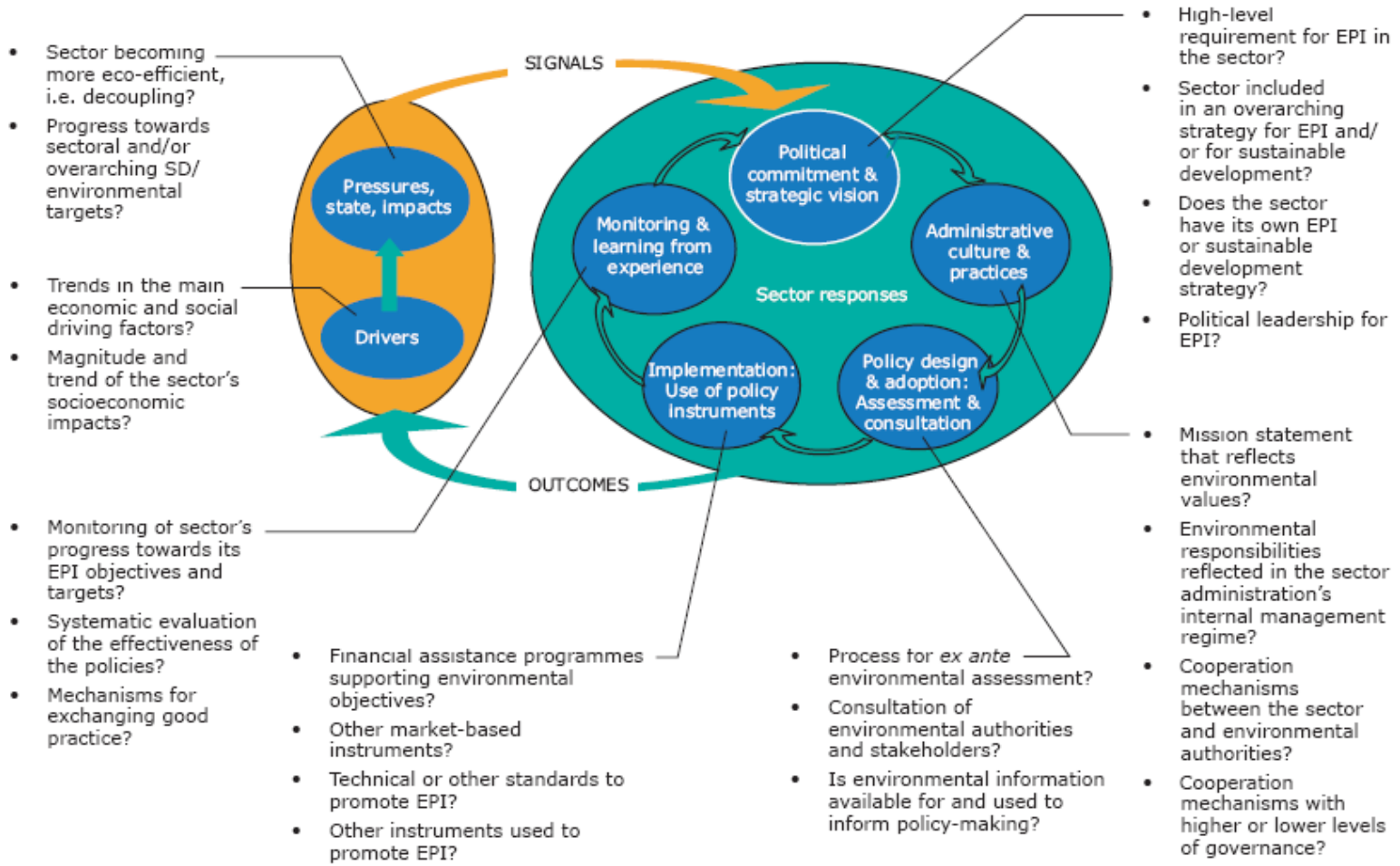
Apply principles for Environmental Policy Integration (EPI):

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

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



EEA Framework for evaluating EPI as sectoral policy



Source: EEA (2005a): 10

Thank you for your kind attention

and

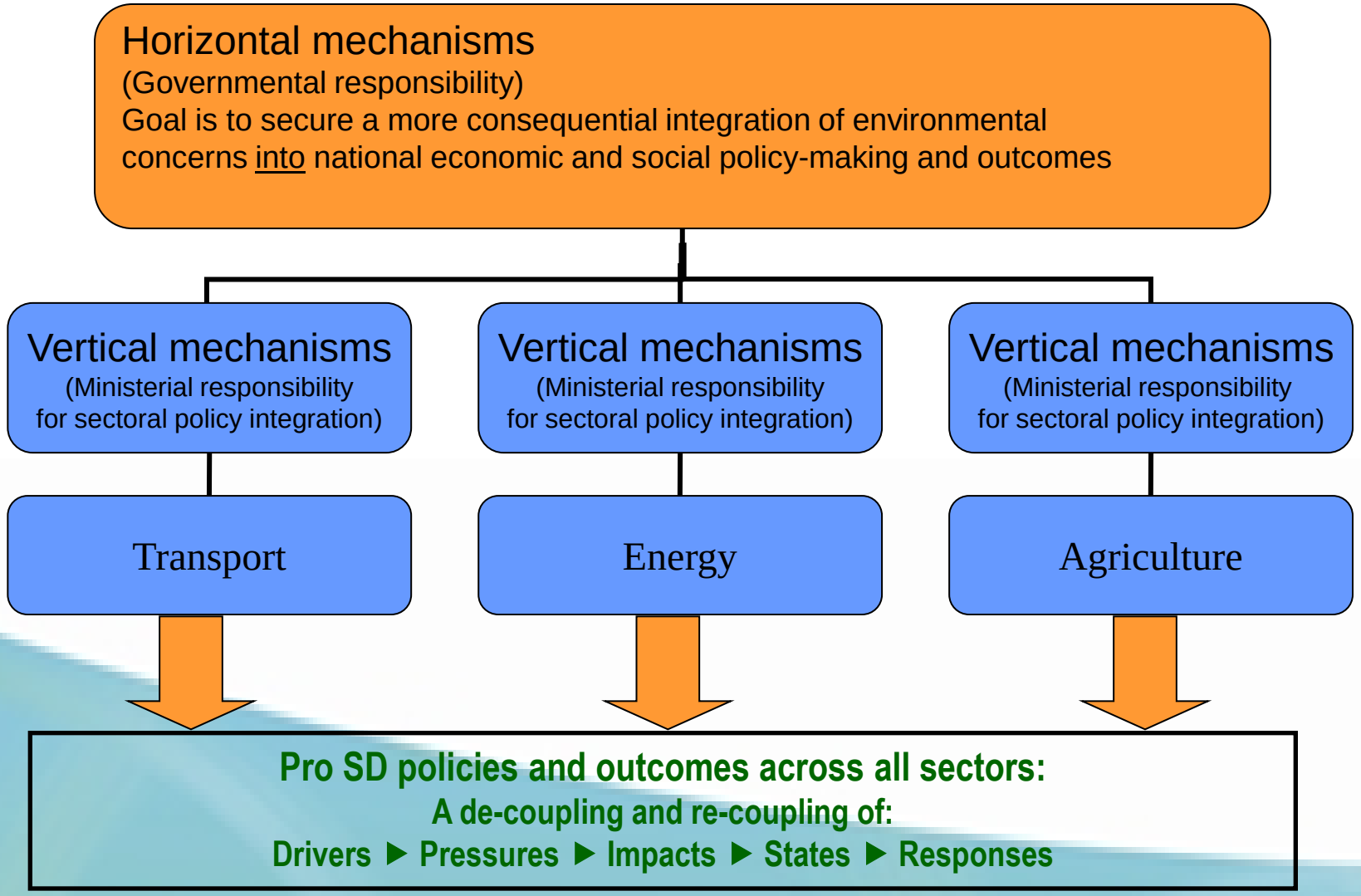
Viel Glück

with

Your studies and – hopefully – your initiatives for

"Regional Sustainable Energy"

The Horizontal and Vertical Dimensions of Environmental Policy Integration



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

Scoping reports of sectoral activity identifying major environmental impacts associated with key actors and processes
Sectoral forums for dialogue and consultation with relevant stakeholders and affected citizens
Sectoral strategies for change, with basic principles, goals, targets and timetables
Sectoral action plans with specified initiatives for achieving goals with target-group related policy instruments
Green budgets for highlighting, prioritizing and carrying through action plans
Monitoring programs for evaluating implementation and revising strategies and action plans

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

A **"constitutive" mandate** providing principles and procedures for reconciling conflicts and trade-offs related to de-coupling and environmental policy integration
An **over-arching strategy** for SD goals and operational principles, and a political mandate for implementation with direct backing from the chief executive authority.
A **national action plan** with both over-arching and sectoral targets, indicators and time-tables.
A **responsible executive body** with designated responsibility (and powers) for the overall coordination, implementation and supervision of the integration process.
A **communications plan** stipulating sectoral responsibility for achieving overarching goals, and outlining how cross-sectoral communications are to be structured and made transparent.
An **independent auditor** with responsibility for monitoring and assessing implementation at both governmental and sectoral levels, and for proposing revisions in subsequent generations of strategies and action plans
A **board of petition and redress** for resolving conflicts of interest between environmental and other societal objectives, interests and actors

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