Governance for sustainable mobility: Environmental Policy Integration (EPI) as a crucial instrument for achieving decoupling

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A Norwegian “Prologue” to the conference theme: “Policy Change for Sustainable Transport”

Highest consumption of petroleum since 1999

Norway’s consumption of petroleum in 2010 was the highest since 1999. According to the Bureau of Statistics [consumption] was 5 percent higher than for 2009.

The use of diesel, heating oil and jet fuel all showed strong increases. Diesel outsold gasoline by two-to-one last year. . . [ending the year at approximately $8.20 per gallon]

The sale of diesel increased by 10 percent; the sale of jet fuel by 10 percent; and the sale of heating oil by 21 percent.

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Environmental Policy Integration (EPI): The concept

- The “name defines the game”:
  - “Environmental Policy Integration” is semantically indicative of a process that involves the integration (conjoining, completing, making whole) of environmental/ecological concerns (values, goals, policy tasks) into other public policies
- The designated activity thus involves:
  - a *governing (steering) process*;
  - designed to produce *amended (“integrated”) sectoral policies*;
  - the consequences of which are *environmentally benign*.
- The term has been thoroughly elaborated within two parallel “discourses”:
  - A “political discourse”: Related to commitments by national governments to implement international and regional agreements (UN and EU) which aim to promote sustainable development.
  - An “academic discourse”: Devoted to clarification of both the normative and empirical-analytic nature of the concept

The “mandate” for EPI within the political discourse:

The Brundtland Report:

“The ability to choose policy paths that are sustainable requires that the ecological dimensions of policy be considered at the same time as the economic, trade, energy, agricultural, industrial, and other dimensions – on the same agendas and in the same national and international institutions. That is ***the chief institutional challenge of the 1990s****.”*

(WCED 1987: 313)

Article 11 of the basic “Principles” of the *Consolidated Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union*:

“Environmental protection requirements ***must be integrated into*** *the definition and implementation of the Community policies and activities, in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development.”*

Clarification of EPI within the academic discourse:

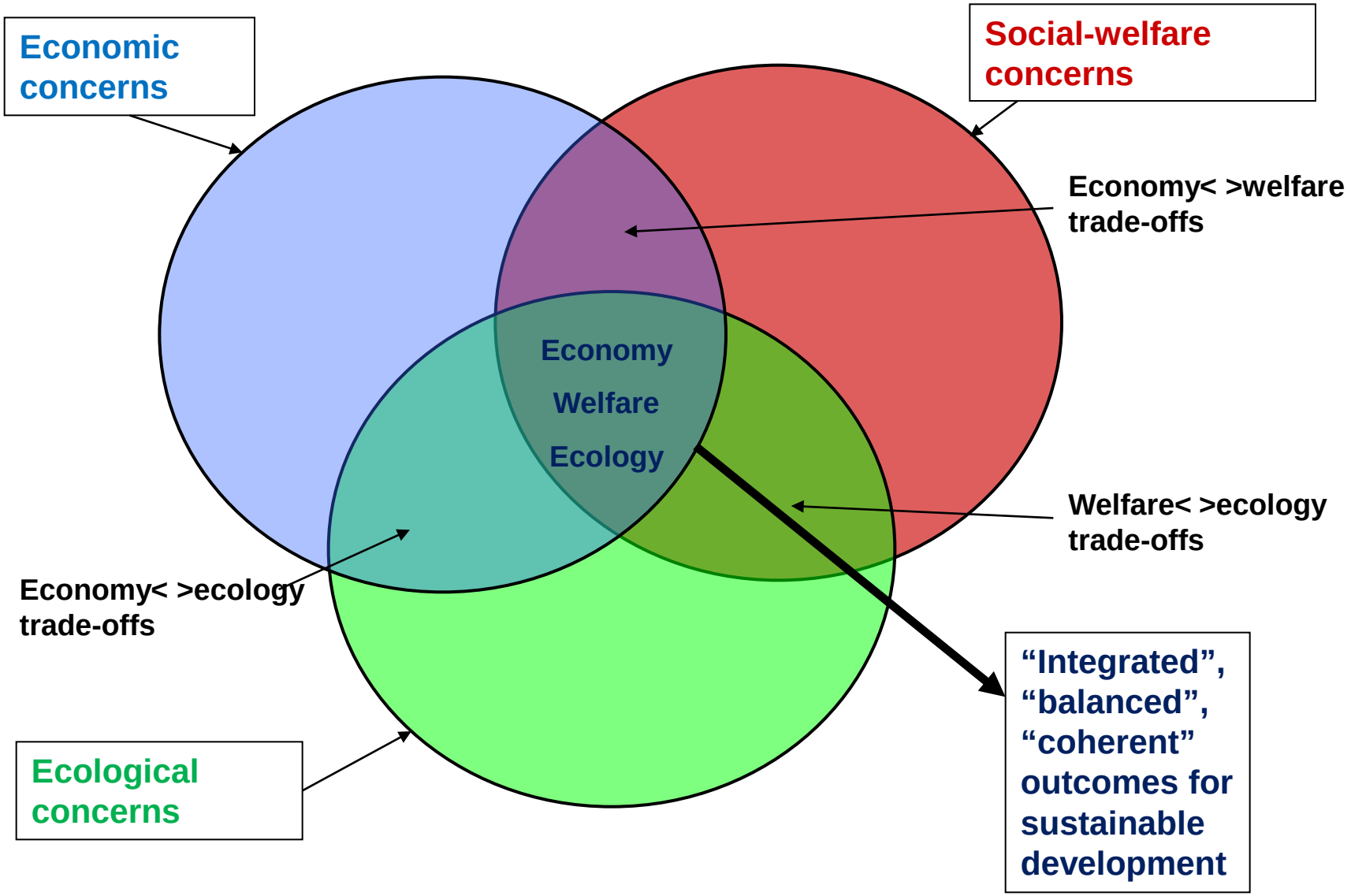
Liberatore (1997: 107):

"The relevance for moving towards sustainable development is straightforward: 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 organization, a new model of development that can be environmentally and socially sustainable in the long term cannot be achieved".

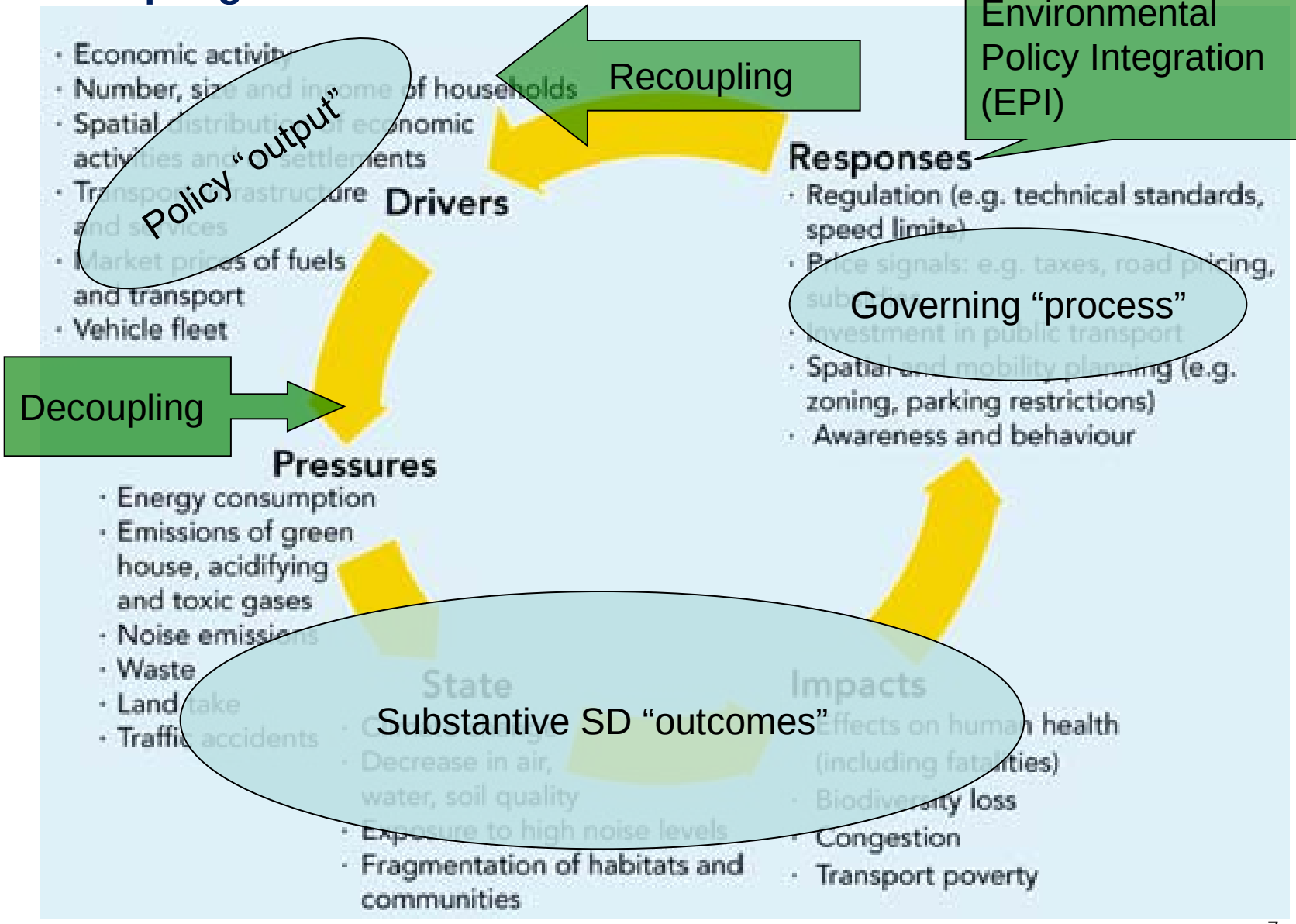
Lenschow (2002: 6-7):

" . . . EPI represents a first-order operational principle to implement and institutionalize the idea of sustainable development".
". . . It implies that policy makers in non-environmental sectors recognize the environmental repercussions of their decisions and adjust them when they undermine sustainable development. . . . In the absence of clearly defined policy goals, indicators and timetables, however, there remains ample room for sectoral policy makers to evade such substantive environmental responsibilities. The integration process currently faces the challenge of ensuring that substance follows from procedure".

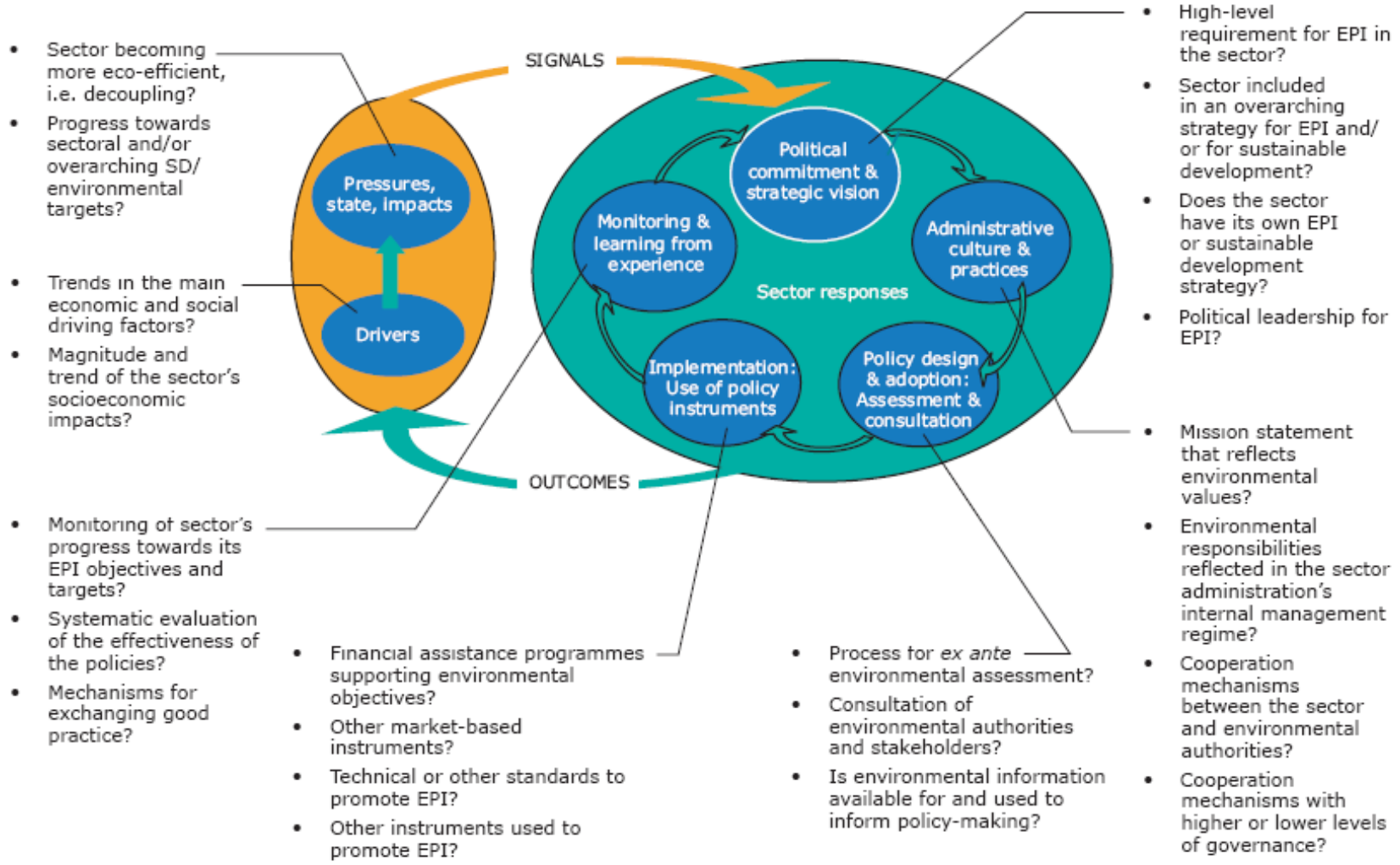
The core EPI problematic: resolving trade-offs to achieve SD



Promoting EPI in the transport sector: decoupling and recoupling within the DPSIR framework

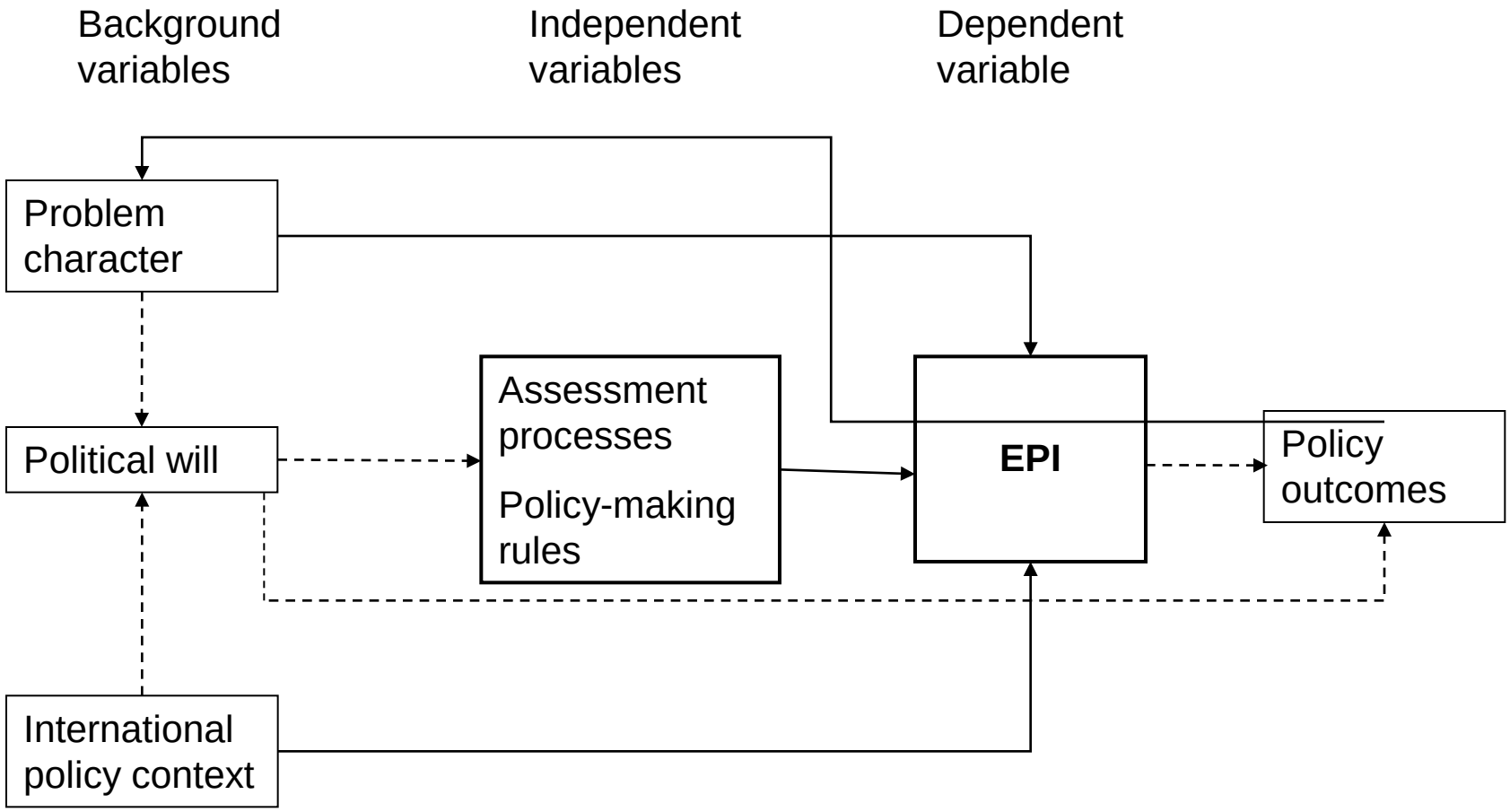


Evaluating EPI as sectoral policy: The EEA Framework

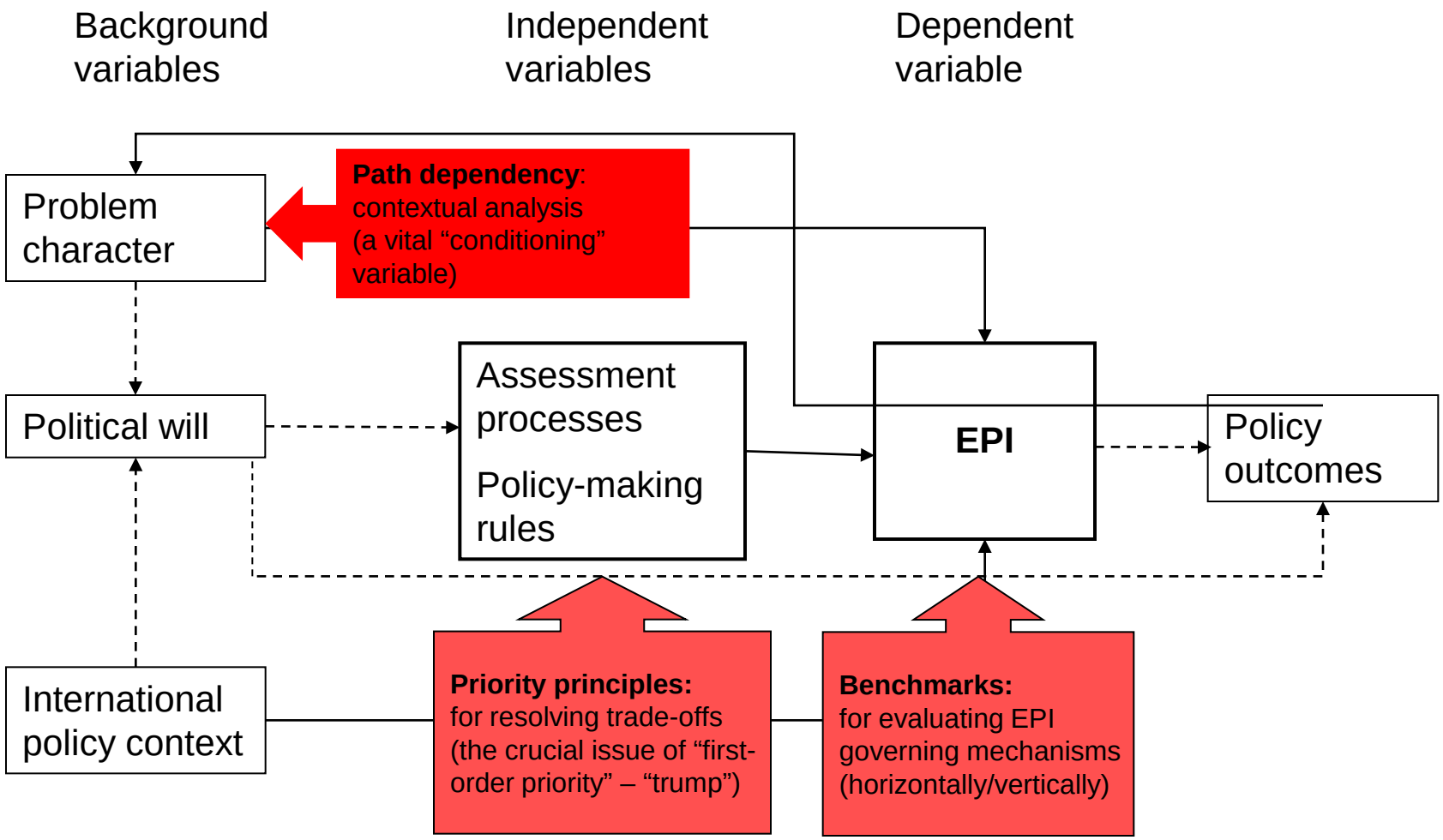


Source: EEA (2005a): 10

The original “academic” model of EPI: Nilsson and Persson (2003)



Supplementing the “academic-model”: The ProSus approach



In sum:

- The analysis and application of EPI within the political and academic discourses is thoroughly documented (Key references attached)
- The European Commission has sponsored a separate research network for further clarification and development of the concept – EPIGOV: http://ecologic.eu/projekte/epigov/
- The European Environment Agency (EEA) continues to focus EPI as a key process for promoting and evaluating sustainable development: http://www.eea.europa.eu/highlights/Ann1120649962
- There are numerous steering instruments available for promoting decoupling through EPI:
  - guidelines for strategic plans and action plans;
  - empirically derived benchmarks for specific governing bodies, decision-making procedures and rules;
  - advisory bodies and “consensus conferences” for resolving knowledge claims and applying the “precautionary principle”
  - indicators for decoupling and eco-efficiency, etc, etc.

Yet .....

- The record for achieving EPI-related governance for decoupling and sustainable development is marginal, fragmented and faltering
- Marginal in terms of both: (1) the number of political domains (national, regional, local) where it has been recognized and introduced; and (2) the relative impact – "transformative potential" – of the sectors involved
- Fragmented in terms of a general lack of horizontal-vertical policy coordination, monitoring and revision
- And, most recently, faltering and in outright reversal due to:
  - The undermining of the Rio Consensus on international soft-law implementation of sustainable development
  - The take-off – and subsequent crash – of the global climate-change agenda
  - A general weakening (in the media) of the scientific arguments for action
  - Major financial, fiscal and economic strain in the Western economies
  - An increasing dysfunctionality in the Western model of "competitive democracy"
- These problems are serious indeed: they require strong remedial action at the international and national levels – action that is not likely to materialize in the near future

What to do?

- Press forward a discourse on the need for “ecological democratization” – new principles, institutions and procedures for “post-competitive”, “post-polyarchal” democracy
- Actively propagate an ethics of stewardship and generational responsibility, as a necessary alternative to open-ended gratification
- Build on the very powerful positive forces emerging in green technology, green investment and market phase-in
- Focus on regional identities and innovation within ecological boundaries, as an alternative to the “politics of allocation” within outmoded political-administrative domains
- Exploit new initiatives for adapting to climate change to promote community-based ecological security
- Openly acknowledge that decentralized, regional initiatives are not a sustainable end in themselves; but constitute a necessary stop-gap means for reviving – and revising – the global development goals of *Our Common Future*

The relevance of transport?

- A crucial sector for EPI and decoupling in general – and a particularly crucial sector for a transition to ecological democracy on a local-regional basis
- A policy sector with an exceptionally high number of economic, social and environmental trade-offs
- An area of intense political scrutiny and debate, with significant impacts on personal-familial identity, life choices and community development
- An area with major negative impacts: climate change, local air and noise pollution, illness and accidental mortality, natural and aesthetic destruction, declining land values, environmental injustice, etc, etc
- An area that is per definition regional in function and scope; and ecological in terms of interdependent impacts
- An SD policy area with exceptional possibilities for exploiting green technology and innovation in all aspects of “sustainable mobility”
- In short: an ideal arena for focusing the crucial **“politics of trade-off and adaptive transition”** necessary for realizing a carbon-neutral community

The challenge for research networks like TEMPO?:

- Continue to heighten the acute relevance of transport policy within the overall applied-science initiative for sustainable development
- Actively work for a more effective, problem-based integration of the social sciences into the design and execution of research projects
- Openly promulgate the relevance of Article 11 of the Treaty of the European Union for transport research and policy
- Increase resource allocations to develop improved methods of scientific dissemination, communication and policy integration.

In Marshall McLuhan's well-known phrase:

"The medium is the message"

At present, issues of mobility and transport constitute a vital "medium" for resolving trade-offs and achieving decoupling

It is up to strategic research networks like TEMPO to analytically transpose this medium into a scientifically based "message" for sustainable mobility

Good luck!

And may the force (of EPI) be with you!

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Institutional/procedural benchmarks for vertical policy integration: The responsibility of ministries

Scoping reports of sectorial 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 tactics for achieving goals with target-group related policy instruments
Green budgets for highlighting, prioritizing and implementing action plans
Monitoring programs for evaluating implementation and revising strategies and action plans

Institutional/procedural benchmarks for horizontal policy integration
The responsibility of governments/cabinets

A **"constitutive" mandate** providing provisions for the special status of environmental/sustainable-development rights and goals.
An **over-arching strategy** for the sectoral domain, with clearly enunciated goals and operational principles, and a political mandate 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 intra-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