

Understanding eco-social policies: a conceptual-analytical exercise

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'Towards a new concept of the welfare state'

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The paper in a nutshell

- Research object: eco-social policies integrating social and ecological policy goals
- Aims:
 - Providing an operationalizable definition of eco-social policies (against conceptual fuzziness and normativity in the literature)
 - Categorizing eco-social policies along 2 dimensions
- Methodology:
 - Literature review of relevant research strands: sustainable development, policy integration, social ecology, sustainable welfare, eco-welfare state
 - Construction of an analytical-conceptual framework

A literature review

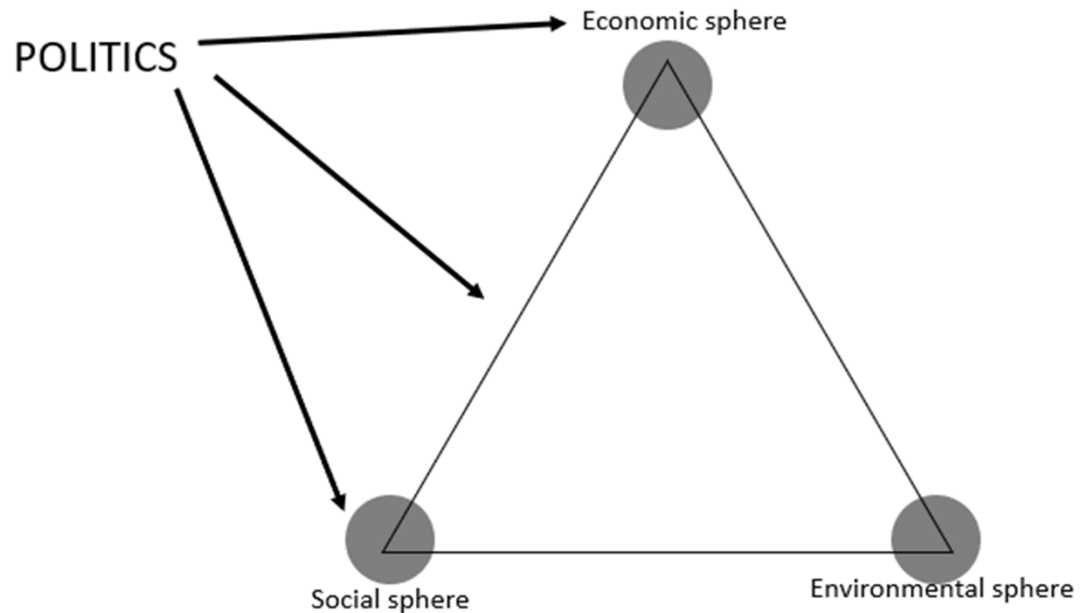
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

- A framework to address the compatibility between social, economic and environmental goals
- The 'limits to growth' and the Brundtland report: *'Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'* (UN 1987)
- The UN's current understanding of sustainable development: the 'triple-bottom-line' approach

THE DEBATE ON ECONOMIC GROWTH

- The controversial role of economic growth:
 - Complementary to social goals
 - Contrary to ecological goals
- Different approaches to this debate:
 - Growth-first neoliberalism
 - Green Keynesianism
 - De-growth

The eco-social-growth trilemma



- 3 policy goals in 3 separate spheres: economic growth, social protection, environmental protection
- The “trilemma” refers to the governance of the interconnections between the 3 spheres

Different approaches to address the trilemma

I. THE COGNITIVE LEVEL

(How) are the three goals related to each other?

4 possible relations between goals (take goals "A" & "B" as example):

- Neutrality: A and B are not related
- Synergy: there is a positive relation between A and B: if A grows B also grows
- Trade-off: there is a negative relation between A and B: if A grows B is at risk.
 - Solvable: we can create synergies between A and B
 - Unsolvable: it is not possible to create synergies between A and B

II. THE NORMATIVE LEVEL

(How) to govern the interconnections between the three goals?

3 rules for governing the eco-social-growth relations:

- If A and B are not related or positively related → policy silos: goals are pursued independently from one another
- If there is a solvable trade-off between A and B → integration to reduce the negative impact of A on B: B and A should be made mutually-reinforcing
- If there is an unsolvable trade-off between A and B → hierarchical ordering: A or B should be prioritized at the expense of the counterpart (which should instead be limited)

Defining eco-social policies

Eco-social policies are defined as public policies designed to pursue explicitly and interconnectedly both ecological and social policy goals

2 key elements:

- 'Explicitly' → output-based definition, to avoid fuzziness and prescriptiveness
- 'Interconnectedly' → policy integration occurs whenever there is a solvable trade-off.
The aim is to bring together potentially-conflictual eco-social policy goals

Some examples: social energy tariffs, green investment through pension funds, working time reduction, investments in energy efficiency for social housing, green vouchers, active labour market policies for redundant workers from sectors in transition

A literature review

ECO-SOCIAL ISSUES, INSTITUTIONS & POLICIES

- The bi-directional 'missing link of sustainable development':
 - The ecological footprint of the welfare state
 - The social costs of ecological issues and policies
 - the 'triple injustice' example
- Bringing together different configurations of ecological and social protection systems: towards an 'eco-welfare state'?
- The academic debate on eco-social policies:
 - Green critiques to the welfare state & the need to reconcile welfare with planetary boundaries
 - 'Sustainable welfare' and 'social ecology': wellbeing, human needs and degrowth
 - Eco-social policies within the ecological transition: just transition

Categorizing eco-social policies

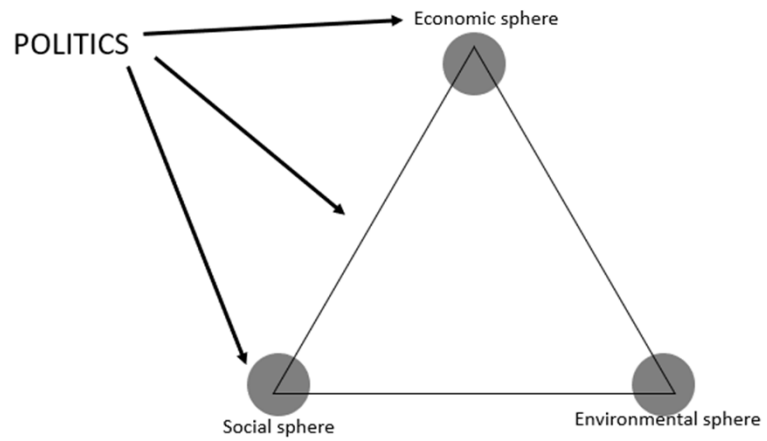
I. THE DIRECTION OF ECO-SOCIAL POLICY INTEGRATION

- Eco-to-social: addressing the negative consequences of ecological issues and policies on social protection → they add a social dimension to environmental policies
- Socio-to-ecological: addressing the negative consequences of social issues and policies on environmental protection → they add an environmental dimension to social policies

II. THE COGNITIVE-NORMATIVE LINK TO ECONOMIC GROWTH

- Growth-oriented: eco-social policies that also aim to foster economic growth through green/social investment
- Not growth-oriented: eco-social policies that do not aim to foster economic growth since they are presented as:
 - Separated from economic growth
 - In contrast to economic growth (i.e. degrowth)

Summing up



	GROWTH-ORIENTED	NOT GROWTH-ORIENTED
ECO-TO-SOCIAL		
SOCIO-TO-ECOLOGICAL		

Thank you for your attention

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