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## The adequate integration of sustainability into transport policy: some major dilemmas

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### Abstract

In this paper we discuss to what extent transport policy fails to integrate five types of external effects, and what kind of research needs follow from the objective to make transport sustainable. The discussion is a synthesis of the findings collected and synthesized in the framework of Focus Group 4 of the STELLA project. The assignment of Focus Group 4 was to draw up a set of recommendations for future transport policy-oriented research dealing with external effects, on the basis of a series of specialist workshops.

Five different kinds of so-called external effects of transport were identified beforehand, being environment, safety and security, public health, land use and congestion. Safety and security as well as congestion are external effects in the sense that they are not 'internalised' in the price of the transport service, but they do affect predominantly others within the transport system. This means that with some delay the transport market still reacts to changes in the intensity of these effects, albeit biased or insufficient. The public goods character of both externalities however implies that public intervention is needed to attain better performance of these external effects, partly via internalisation of the external effects and partly via planning (i.e. by evaluating the trade-offs ex ante).

The other external effects, however, are not only insufficiently internalised in the transport price, but they are also predominantly affecting parties outside the transport system. Consequently, changes in the intensity of these effects do not feed back directly into the transport market. In that case public intervention has even a more complicated task, since it takes more time and is more complicated to learn what are actually the right balances for the trade-offs between adequate access and, in turn, sustainability, spatial quality, and public health.

The presentations and discussions in Focus Group 4 all dealt, one way or another, with these tradeoffs. The represented approaches were about:

- how to make the market (and public planners) better informed
- options to internalise various types of external effects
- comprehensive optimisation models for one or several trade-offs
- dilemmas between the economic, social, and environmental dimension of sustainability
- experienced and perceived policy implementation obstacles, amongst others, those following from social dilemma situations.

In this short paper it is evidently impossible to discuss all the issues and findings from the seminars and synthesis papers produced during the project. Given the need to be selective amidst the plenty of topics this paper casts the discussion of the main findings

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into two themes, being:

1. the decisive influence of the choice of sustainability paradigm

2. the problems regarding policy implementation

We argue that both in science and in policy-making there is lack of consensus regarding the operationalisation of sustainability in transport and the consequent sense of urgency; hence there is an apparent need to move much closer to a consensus and preferably rather quickly. However, the lack of a comprehensive consensus does not need to hold hostage those sustainable transport measures about which specialists largely agree. The implementation of those scientifically undisputed measures is often inhibited by a belated and excessively instrumentalist consideration of the social dimension.

Keywords: transport, sustainability, security, globalisation