Silos or integrated policy making?
An analysis of national institutional approaches to implementing the 2030 Agenda

Anita Breuer, Julia Leininger and Jale Tosun

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1. Introduction

The implementation of the 2030 Agenda poses new challenges to political institutions and processes. If the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with their 169 targets shall be implemented in an integrated way[1] (Article 13, 2030 Agenda), innovative governance approaches are needed. In order to exploit synergies and mitigate trade-offs between the SDGs, their implementation needs to be networked, work at all levels – from local to global – and be multi-scale (Leininger et al. 2018).

Although sustainable development has been playing an increasingly relevant role on the international agenda since the early 1990s, no substantive efforts for integrated implementation were made. Instead, the international community rather focused on the concept of good governance, which was conceived as a precondition for effective development policies (Fukuyama 2016, 91). Governance reforms addressed the efficiency, participation and accountability of state institutions in specific sectors. Despite continuing efforts to coordinate development policies between sectors and actors (for an overview, see Ugland and Veggeland 2006; Candel and Biesbroek 2016; Candel 2017; Tosun and Lang 2017; Trein et al. 2018), political and administrative efforts to integrate different sectors are still limited.[2] To date, in many countries the implementation of development policies is, thus, far from integrated and is still characterized by sectoral approaches as well as clearly delineated ministerial responsibilities. In addition to organizational fragmentation, potential or actual trade-offs between policy goals are often not dealt with explicitly, sometimes even undermining the achievements of other goals. Against this background, the Agenda 2030 of the year 2015 calls for deep institutional transformation and governance reform to achieve the SDGs.

National bodies to coordinate SDG implementation were being created starting from late 2015. However, many countries yet have to transform their newly created legal frameworks into operational institutions. It is thus far too early to make empirically substantiated statements about how effective these infant institutions will be in simultaneously achieving the inter-related SDGs. In a first step, and as a basis for future analyses on effectiveness, it is important to know, if and which institutional designs are in place and why they were choosen.

Over the past two years, the institutional challenges associated with SDG implementation were mainly addressed in international policy reports (e.g. OECD, 2016; United Nations, 2018; CCIC, 2018) which have focused on different selections of countries as well as on different dimensions of policy integration and policy domains[3]. These reports have in common that they describe the

[1] Literature on policy integration usually refers to "integration" as a dimension on which policies in specific issue area can be assessed as being more or less coherent. Integration can thus be conceptualized as a continuum that ranges from least coherent to fully coherent (see e.g. United Nations 2018).

[2] Coordination is the systematic and regular exchange (ranging from merely sharing information to a strict division of labour) between development actors. In development policy, coordination is a means to divide labor and avoid double work as well as increase policy coherence (Torsvik 2005). Hence, coordination does not necessarily lead to policy integration but policy integration is not possible without coordination (Peters 2015; Tosun and Lang 2017).

[3] Based on a survey of 33 countries - out of which 29 are OECD member countries – the OECD (2016), renders a descriptive account of national bodies for SDG-implementation with a particular focus on 'horizontal' policy coordination and the role of Centres of Government (CoG) in the implementation process. CCIC (2018), in turn, is a report commissioned by civil society organizations, which provides an analysis of 42 of the 43 VNRs produced for the HLPF in 2017, with a particular focus on the engagement of non-state stakeholders and links of national SDG implementation to national and international human rights frameworks. United Nations (2018) reviews 60 of the 65 countries that presented VNRs in 2016 and 2017. The report provides an analysis of both, formal, institutional structures of national bodies for SDG-implementation, as well as tools and instruments that are important for policy integration, including national development strategies and plans, the budget process, the

mechanisms and challenges of SDG implementation from a governance and policy perspective. However, none of these reports analyses the question which factors motivate governments' institutional choices regarding the attainment of an integrated implementation of SDG policies. Yet improving our understanding of institutional choices is highly relevant for several reasons. First, it allows identifying root causes of reform blockades and enablers for institutional reforms (e.g. Tosun 2013). Second, it is likely to generate different country groupings, which would make it possible to cluster and systematize reform options in different countries, thereby making policy advice more efficient (e.g. Paasi, 2005). Third, it helps identifying entry points for inter- and transnational support to integrated SDG implementation (e.g. Tosun, 2013; Tosun and Peters 2018; Tosun et al. 2019). Fourth, it allows establishing whether there is a need for creating transnational administrations (e.g. Stone and Ladi, 2015).

Against this background, aim of this paper is twofold. First, it seeks to assess governments' proposals for institutional designs for SDG implementation on the national level and identify patterns of institutional designs. Second, it aims to explain which political factors shaped these institutional designs. We cover factors related to the interplay between individual dimensions of institutional designs, the political regime, government system and state organization.

Theoretically, the paper integrates literatures on rational choice theories of policy making, historical institutionalism and governance reforms. In so doing, it contributes to a better understanding of the interplay between the attributes of a political system, state capacity and their influence on the types of institutional designs for implementing development policies. Conceptually it offers a typology of national regimes for SDG implementation, which can inform future empirical analysis. Methodologically, it provides a new dataset on the different types of national implementation regimes for the SDGs.

In view of the above, the paper seeks to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: How are national bodies for SDG-implementation designed?

RQ2: Which political factors shape governments' institutional design choices concerning SDG implementation?

In the remainder of this paper is structured as follows: In the next (second) section we will introduce a four dimensional typology of national bodies for SDG-implementation. . This typology is based on literature at the intersection of rationale choice policy analysis, political regimes and governance reforms. In the third section, we develop four hypotheses about the interaction between the different dimensions of the institutional design and the influence of political factors on the choice of institutional design. The fourth section addresses the first research question by identifying seven types of institutional designs and applying them to individual countries. It also introduces the data and methods for the empirical analysis. To address RQ1,the fifth, empirical section applies this typology to the SDG implementing countries. It offers a systematic overview of the proposed formal structures of national bodies for SDG-implementation for those countries that presented their VNR in 2016 and 2017. To address RQ2, we first analyze how political factors influence governments' institutional design choices regarding governance structures of integrated SDG implementation. The paper concludes with a summary of the results and an outlook on future research needs, including the further development of our own research project.

role of the public service, procedures for monitoring and review, and the role of parliaments and Supreme Audit Institutions.

2. Proposing a four dimensional typology of national SDG-governance bodies for integrated implementation of the 2030 Agenda

The SDGs were built on the central insight from the MDG process that systemic change cannot be reached through single-sector approaches. Given its indivisible nature, implementing the 2030 Agenda will require the dismantling of traditional silos in order to achieve policy coherence across different policy sectors, government levels, and societal actors (ECOSOC, 2016; TWI2050, 2018). There is consensus, that a truly integrated implementation of the SDGs will require deep institutional reform and innovative institutional approaches.

However, as countries are still experimenting on how to best deliver on the 2030 Agenda (Persson et al 2016a), there is no single institutional model that has been empirically proven to most efficiently address the implementation challenges of the SDGs (OECD, 2017). All the same, and across the board, policy reports and briefings, as well as speeches at high-level international events consistently emphasize four factors that are perceived crucial for successfully achieving the SDGs. In addition, previous studies on the effectiveness of development policies also highlight the relevance of the following factors (e.g. Newig 2009):

- High-level political leadership (e.g. Bernstein & Abbott, 2015; United Nations, 2017; Harlin, 2018) a)
- Horizontal coherence across policy sectors (e.g. UNDP, 2017)
- Vertical coordination across levels of government (e.g. UNDP, 2017; ICSU, 2017)
- Multi-stakeholder engagement (Dodds, 2015; Beisheim, 2016; Stafford-Smith et al., 2017)

Taking up on these perceptions and findings, we propose a four-dimensional typology for the categorization of national bodies for SDG-implementation that considers the following dimensions of policy coherence: (1) political leadership, (2) horizontal integration, (3) vertical integration, and (4) societal integration. The rationale underlying the choice of these dimensions is described below.

2.1 Political Leadership

The most important place for horizontal policy coordination and management of horizontal issues is generally assumed to be located at the Centre of Government (CoG), i.e. the chief executive and the central agencies serving this executive (Peters, 2015; OECD, 2016). However, prime ministers and presidents themselves often merely play a symbolic role in these policy processes. They normally do not possess the capacity to produce effective coordination as they have insufficient time resources to coordinate the abundance of activities of the ministries under their oversight. Rather than this, they develop staffs, organizations, or agencies that assist them in this task, such as Ministries or General-Secretariats of the Presidency, Offices of the President or Prime Minister, or Cabinet Offices.

It is important to note, that structural definitions of CoG categorize only those institutions as belonging to the CoG that directly and exclusively support the head of government (Alessandro et al., 2013). When managing cross-sectoral policy issues, one advantage of CoG agencies over sector ministries is that their capacities are not tied up in the delivery of goods or services to the general public. Since they exclusively provide advice to the chief executive, they have more flexibility to adapt to changing issues, for instance by creating task forces or temporary structures.

By contrast, functional definitions of CoG also categorize those institutions as belonging to the CoG that perform supra-sectoral, whole-of-government functions, particularly with regards to

planning, coordination, political management or monitoring (Alessandro et al., 2013). In addition to the institutions mentioned above, functional definitions of CoG may thus also include institutions that are not directly part of the presidency / core executive, such as Ministries of Planning or Finance. In this paper, we adopt the later functional approach.

Research on the National Councils on Sustainable Development (NCSD), which were created in the follow-up of the Rio Earth Summit in 1992, indicates that support and leadership by the CoG is conducive to effective policy coordination. UNDP (2017) for example finds that NCSDs that were located within a specific ministry did often not have the necessary political clout to effectively coordinate sustainable development matters whereas countries that located their NCSDs under the office of the president or prime minister noted that the high-level position ensured effective coordination. In a similar vein, Osborne et al. (2014) found NCSDs with ministerial members to be a useful means of securing an integrated government approach to sustainable development when led or given strong support by a Head of State. By contrast, however, according to these authors, NCSDs composed exclusively by prime ministers found it hard to develop the necessary longer-term vision that sustainability transition requires. Another important aspect pointed out by is the important role of finance and planning ministries (Swanson & Pintér 2004; Fantu 2006; Whitfield 2009). As these authors explain, the cross-cutting vision and specific objectives formulated in a national sustainable development strategy will likely remain at the periphery of government decision-making if they are not adequately considered in budget planning and fiscal priority setting.

On the downside, relying exclusively on the CoG for policy coordination may produce adverse, centralizing effects. Sometimes the source of conflict over certain issues and policies can be more easily identified at the lower working levels of government. Where this is the case, by the time the CoG learns about a conflict, valuable information about what actually caused the conflict may be lost and with it the government's ability solve the coordination problem that caused the conflict. As Guy Peters (2015) adequately puts it: "*The top-down approach common to coordination may often not match the bottom-up reality of the problems*" (ibid., p.75). With a view to efficient coordination, it thus appears desirable that national bodies for SDG-implementation should enjoy support from the highest level of government while at the same time being composed in a way that allows sector ministries to bring in their expertise and practical working experience.

Regarding the dimension of political leadership, it is thus essential to ask the following questions: Where in the executive is the national body for SDG-implementation located? Who presides the body?

2.2 Horizontal Integration

Given the interlinked character of the 2030 Agenda, it is frequently postulated that SDG-governance bodies with an inter-ministerial, cross-sectoral set-up should be better suited to identify cross-cutting issues and address linkages and interdependencies between the SDGs and their targets, than those that are located in a single specific ministry (UNDP, 2017; UNDESA, 2018; OECD, 2017).

This claim is supported by research on National Sustainable Development Strategies (NSDS) of the 1990s and early 2000s. In their comparative analysis of 19 NSDS of developing and developed countries Swanson and Pintér (2004) criticize that these strategies typically focused on only one or two dimensions of sustainable development. While national environmental strategies were sophisticated in their understanding of sustainability principles, they were usually weak in understanding the linkages with the social and economic dimensions of sustainable development.

Similarly, Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP) considered social and economic aspects but generally offered little in the way of environmental aspects. In a similar vein, Gjoski et al (2010), who compare the NSDS of 29 European countries, find that, typically, Ministries of Environment were in charge for the implementation and monitoring of these processes. Belonging to the weaker ministries in many countries, Ministries of Environment often found it necessary to court more influential actors for their support. Consequentially, according to the authors, the disadvantaged negotiation position of Environment Ministries often lead to a ”watering down” of NSDSs (ibid. p. 5).

These findings suggest that national bodies for SDG-implementation will only be able to balance the interdependencies between the social, economic, and environmental dimensions of the 2030 Agenda if they profit from the expertise and experience of the relevant ministries active in these areas.

Regarding the dimension of horizontal integration it is thus essential to ask: How many and which ministries are formally represented in the national body for SDG-implementation?

2.3 Vertical Integration

There is broad agreement in the international policy community that an integrated implementation of the 2030 Agenda will require policy coherence between different levels of government (e.g. UNDESA, 2018; Pisano, Lange and Berger, 2017; OECD, 2017). The majority of SDGs involve both a sub-national and local dimension. Local governments play an important role in formulating, implementing and delivering services. They are thus crucial in strengthening the ownership and legitimacy of SDG policies by linking the implementation of the global agenda with the needs of the local communities that are affected by these policies (UNDESA, 2018). Therefore, strategic and effective, national action for sustainable development needs to catalyze action at the sub-national and local levels and manage interdependencies between these levels (Swanson and Pintér, 2004; Ongaro, 2017).

However, vertical integration comes at a cost. Decentralization and devolution are complex processes that may require the creation of additional structures, legislation and regulation, and monitoring and evaluation. Moreover, generating consensus between national and sub-national governments with diverging policy priorities and political agendas may be difficult and includes the risk of diluting SDG action (UNDESA, 2018). Based on research on national climate mitigation action, Pisano, Mulholland & Berger (2016), for example, caution that vertical integration may not be appropriate in all contexts or at all stages in the design and implementation of sustainability action.

These concerns can be reflected in the formal structure of national bodies for SDG-implementation: When it comes to SDG implementation, national governments may shy away from giving sub-national governments a permanent seat at the table including a formal voice and vote. Instead, they can opt to collect the input of sub-national governments by means of technical working groups without formal decision making power. Alternatively, they can opt to involve them for a limited period of time and for specific purposes such as national consultation processes for prioritizing SDG action; efforts of information dissemination, diffusion and awareness raising; or monitoring and evaluation.

Regarding the dimension of vertical integration it is thus essential to ask the following questions: Are sub-national governments formally and permanently represented in the national body for

SDG-implementation located? Or are they member of permanent working groups that report to the national body?

2.4 Societal Integration

Throughout the 1990s and over the process of the MDGs after 2000, growing consensus emerged among the involved actors that traditional governmental approaches were no longer sufficient in the management of sustainable development (Dodds, 2015). As a result, today, the call to formulate and implement the SDGs with the widest possible societal participation is almost ubiquitous in policy reports dealing with the 2030 Agenda. The rationale behind this call is that societal participation is indispensable to facilitate policy integration (Nordbeck & Steurer, 2015). There is general agreement that building the integrated visions and strategies that are needed to support sustainability transformation requires a broad societal consensus that can only be achieved through the engagement and inclusion of major societal groups, including businesses, trade unions, academics, and civil society organizations. In addition, compliance with the principle of "leaving no one behind" will also require engaging with the full diversity of societal stakeholders, including representatives of marginalized and minority groups (UNDESA, 2018). At the most basic level, awareness about and ownership of the SDGs by the whole of society needs to be increased if the 2030 Agenda is to succeed. Not less importantly, addressing the investment gap for attaining the SDGs will not be possible without the engagement of the private sector (Schmidt-Traub & Sachs, 2015).

Clearly, building situations in which public, social, and private stakeholders pool their resources and competencies to commonly and effectively address the SDGs will require building institutional frameworks and structures that are able to reconcile and integrate the diverging needs and interests of these stakeholders. Research on integrated strategies in European environmental policymaking during the 2000s observed considerable variation regarding institutional approaches to involve stakeholders in sustainable development processes (Nordbeck & Steurer, 2015). With regards to timing, for example, stakeholder participation was most common in the phase of formulating national sustainability strategies but often petered out afterwards (Gjoski et al., 2010; von Raggamby & Rubik 2012). While some countries relied on punctual and temporary participation via roundtables and conferences, others opted for a longer term institutionalization of stakeholder participation via National Councils for Sustainable Development. Another form of bringing key actors of civil society, governments and business together is through public-private partnerships (PPP) or multi-stakeholder partnerships (MSP) for sustainable development. A cross-national study by Pattberg et al. (2012) found that such partnerships were implemented mostly in OECD countries, rather than in least developed countries.

It is also important to note, that multi-stakeholder engagement does not only entail benefits but also comes with certain risks. Most frequently mentioned in this regard are the potential negative side effects that come with private sector involvement (e.g. Beisheim, 2016; Pattberg et al., 2012). As the authors of ECOSOC 2018 (p. 5) put it: "*Private sector financing of the SDGs has its limits in the profit maximizing rational of private sector activities, as ultimately the SDGs are public goods that cannot become bankable projects*."

Regarding the dimension of societal integration it is thus essential to ask the following questions: Are non-state stakeholders formally and permanently represented in the national body for SDG-implementation located? Or are they members of permanent working groups that report to the national body? And Which stakeholders are represented?

3. Political factors shaping governments' institutional design choices: hypotheses

In this analysis, we make a threefold argument regarding the impact of political and cost factors on institutional design choices. The first argument is that the design choices are interdependent, which draws from rational-choice theories of policymaking. Decision-makers will take into consideration the benefits and costs of their actions and act accordingly (North 1990). The establishment of an institutional structure for the implementation of the SDG requires initial investments as well as follow-up costs. The more complex an institutional structure, the higher the expected transaction costs that arise during the implementation phase (see Tosun et al. 2019). For instance, the more line ministries or non-state actors involved in policy formulation and SDG implementation, the higher the transaction costs. We pose the question whether the political actors are more willing to accept the transaction costs that arise from the need for coordination at the level of line ministries or those transaction costs that arise from the interaction of subnational entities and civil society actors. We contend that a rational policymaker will attempt to reduce the costs associated with either dimension, while avoiding coordination costs altogether will be impossible as the 2030 Agenda explicitly asks for the adoption of an integrated and coherent approach (SDG target 17.4). Based on these considerations, we expect a trade-off between horizontal integration on the one hand and vertical and/or societal integration on the other hand. Our first hypothesis thus postulates a negative relationship between the number of line ministries involved and the involvement of subnational entities and/or non-state (civil society) stakeholders.

H1a: The greater the number of line ministries involved in the implementation of the SDGs, the smaller the likelihood of the involvement of subnational entities.

H1b: The greater the number of line ministries involved in the implementation of the SDGs, the smaller the likelihood of the involvement of non-state stakeholders.

Conversely, however, there is good reason to hypothesize that there is a mutually reinforcing effect of the involvement of subnational entities and civil society organizations. The literature on multi-level governance has shown that civil society organizations have better access to policymakers at the local and regional level. For instance, the literature on climate policy experiments has shown that the local level in particular, alliances between policymakers and civil society organizations are easy to form (e.g. Andonova et al. 2009; Kern and Bulkeley 2009). Therefore, we expect that vertical integration is conducive to societal integration and vice versa.

H2a: The inclusion of non-state stakeholders increases the likelihood of involving subnational entities in the implementation of the SDGs.

H2b: The inclusion of subnational entities increases the likelihood of involving non-state stakeholders in the implementation of the SDGs.

As already elaborated above, the costs incurring from the establishment of institutional arrangements refer to investment and follow-up costs. The first two hypotheses addressed the latter issue. We now turn to the issue of investment costs. In this context, a frequently made argument is that the design of institutions depends on state capacities (e.g. Chindarkar et al. 2017; Fukuyama 2017). Countries with a well-equipped and capable public administration should be in a position to propose more complex institutional designs that better capture the mandate of the 2030 Agenda to pursue cross-sectoral policy integration.

H3a: The greater the institutional capacity of a country, the greater the likelihood of involving a higher number of line ministries.

H3b: The greater the institutional capacity of a country, the greater the likelihood of the involvement of subnational entities.

H3c: The greater the institutional capacity of a country, the greater the likelihood of the involvement of non-state stakeholders.

Considering again the costs associated with institutional design (see Pierson 2000) and the path dependency of institutional choices (Thelen 1999; Steinmo 2008), we expect that features of the political system and state organization influence the institutional design choices for SDG implementation.

First, the government system influences the number of actors involved in policy-making. Presidential systems concentrate power in the executive, which limits the scope and strength of line ministries' mandates. In turn, parliamentarian systems give more power to individual line ministries and are thus more inclined to involve them in policy-making. Changing this basic division of labor in a government system would increase costs for the system as a whole beyond the process of SDG implementation.

Second, democratic political systems, which by definition open political processes to non-state actors can be expected to choose an institutional design, which allows fo civil society participation. Conversely, autocratic regimes are less likely to open their policy processes to societal actors, unless they control societal participation. Costs for societal inclusiveness are too high in autocratic regimes because opening up the regime might cause changes in the power structures and, thus, endanger the position of powerholders (Olsen 1993).

Third, centralized systems are likely to maintain this basic design choice and to favor exclusive institutional arrangements. Conversely, systems that are more decentralized favor more inclusive institutional designs as they have already such arrangements in place and no additional costs would arise from such a design.

H4a: Parliamentary systems have a greater likelihood of involving a higher number of line ministries in the institutional design for SDG implementation.

H4b: Participatory systems have a greater likelihood of involving non-state stakeholders in the institutional design for SDG implementation.

H4c: Decentralized systems have a greater likelihood of involving subnational entities in the institutional design for SDG implementation.

4. Clarifications on data and methods & empirical description of types of SDG-implementation regimes

The present analysis focuses on the institutional design thatgovernments proposed national bodies in charge of SDG implementation. It relies on our own coding of countries' Voluntary National Reports (VNR) presented to the UN High Level Political Forum for Sustainable Development (HLPF) in 2016 and 2017. The total number of countries covered by our original dataset is 62.[4] The VNRs were coded by at least two persons separately and checked afterward for consistency by a third person.[5] When inconsistencies were observed, a fourth person (who in each case was one of the authors of this study) took an executive decision on the final coding of the data point concerned. In light of the nature of the documents coded, the authors had to take executive decisions regarding ambiguous coding in about 20% percent of all data points. This is

[4] The total number of VNRs presented in 2016 and 2017 is 65. Out of these, the VNRs of China and Samoa are not available online. Togo presented a VNR in both 2016 and 2017. Our analysis only considers Togo's VNR of 2017..

[5] On this occasion, we thank Bugra Ahlatci, Paula Alejandra González Mateus, Lucas Leopold, Ramona Hägele Julian Rossello, Paul Thalmann, and Semyon Pavlenko for their support in coding the data.

due to the fact that the wording of the VNRs is more open to interpretation than we originally anticipated. Yet the fact that the data was coded by multiple coders along with our own expertise regarding the characteristics of the data makes us confident about the quality of the database. The instructions according to which the data was coded were also subject to iterative processes, whereby the initial guidelines were revised multiple times in order to ensure that they are straightforward to understand and implement.[6] In sum, the database is likely to represent a solid base for empirical analysis, which, however, suffers from the flaw of containing relatively few observations at this point.[7]

Our analysis rests on four dependent variables, which are based on the rationale of the four dimensions of policy coherence introduced in section 2.

The first two dimensions analyzed here are Political Leadership and Horizontal integration.

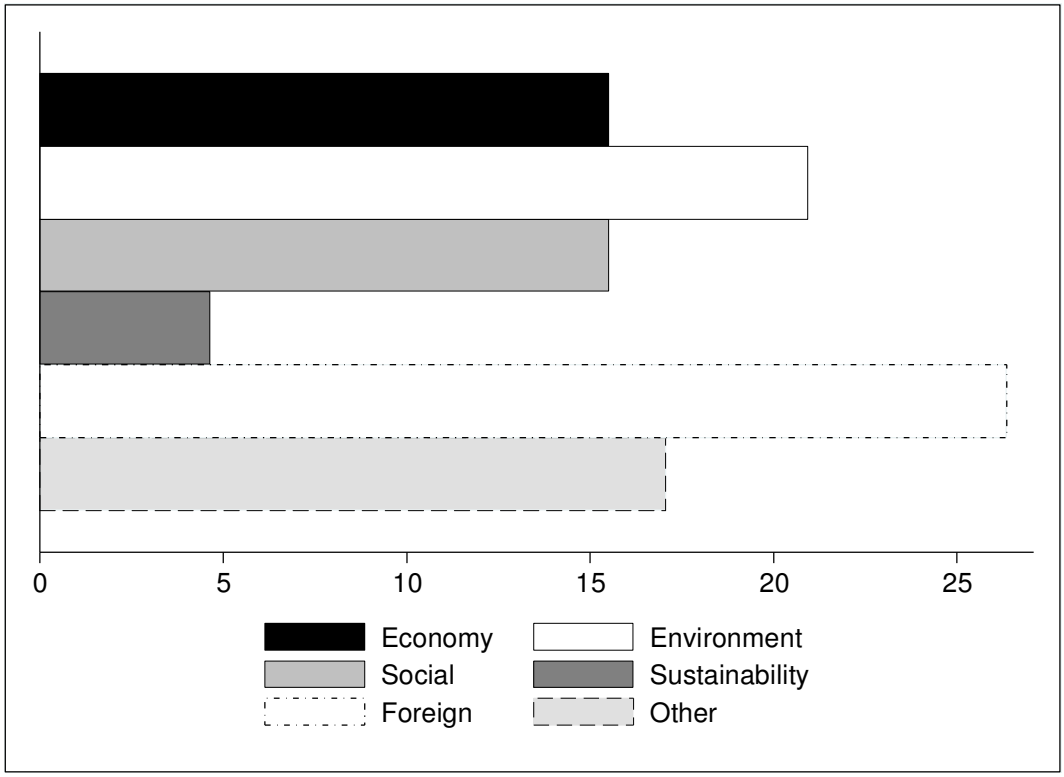
With regards to *horizontal integration*, i.e. the number of **Line Ministries** involved in the SDG implementation process, our data differentiates between the categories of economy, environment, social, and sustainability as well as foreign ministries and the residual category of other ministries. In cases where ministries mentioned in the VNR are responsible for two of these six resorts, we assigned it to one category only. More specifically, we assigned it to the category that was mentioned first. This was only the case in two instances in which the ministries in charge of environmental issues are at the same time in charge of sustainable development. When the VNRs mentioned any of these ministries as being represented in the national body for SDG implementation, we assigned it the value 1 (and 0 otherwise) and then computed the count variable on that basis.

Figure 1 gives on overview of how often the individual line ministries were mentioned in the VNRs as a percentage share. We can infer from the bar graphs that the ministries of foreign affairs and environmental protection are most prominently mentioned in the VNRs. The assignment of responsibility to the ministries of foreign affairs is plausible when bearing in mind that the SDGs are an international policy agenda, which we will require a considerable degree of coordination among the states. The frequent mentioning of environment ministries suggests that many governments associated the SDGs with an environmental agenda, which is interesting considering the wide range of topics comprised by the SDG agenda.

[6] The coding instructions are available from the authors upon request.

[7] We are currently in the process of extending the database to include the 42 VNRs that were presented at the meeting of the HLPF from 9 to 22 July 2018.

Figure 1: Percentage share on line ministry mentions in the VNRs



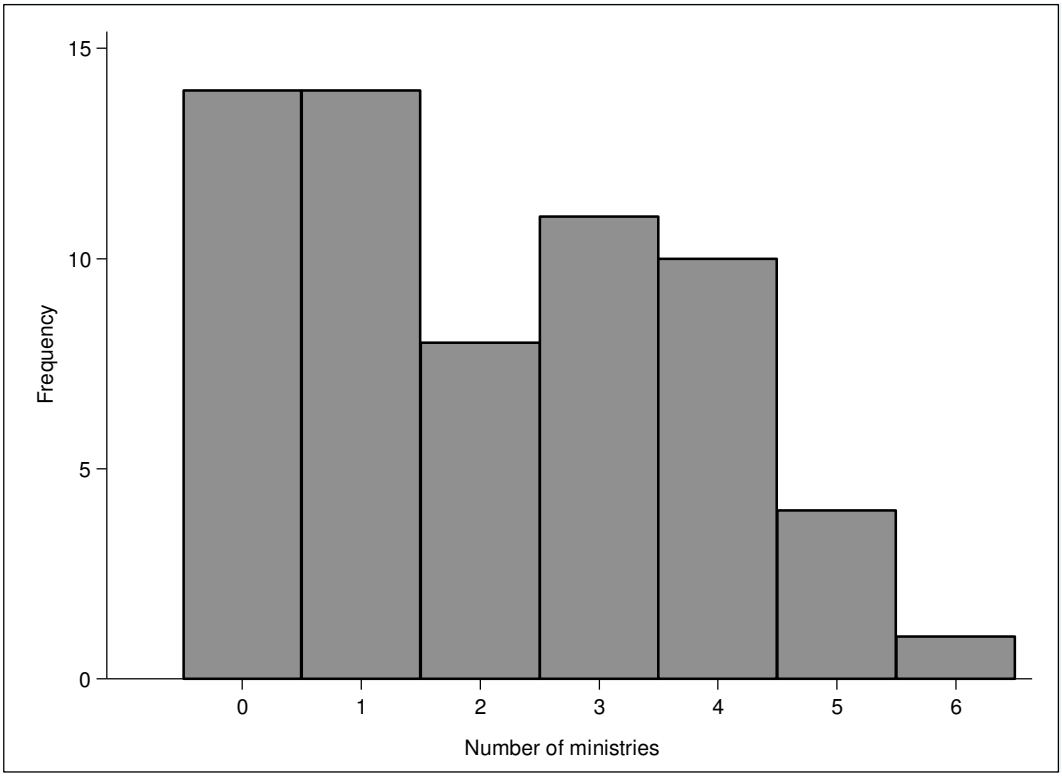
The dominance of the ministries responsible for foreign affairs and the environment persists when we inspect the descriptive statistics our dependent variable *political leadership*, i.e. for those line ministries that are indicated as presiding the national body for SDG implementation. Table 1 also shows that in four cases multiple ministries were assigned the responsible to lead the implementation process. In this context, it is important to mention that we differentiate between the Center of Government (CoG) and line ministries having the leadership in the implementation process – we will return to that when we introduce the explanatory variables. Further and as explained in section 2, it should be noted that we define the ministries of finance and planning as belonging the CoG as there function is different from classic line ministries due to their overarching responsibilities.

Table 1: Overview the frequency of ministries with Political Leadership over SDG implementation

Ministry	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Economy	3	12.00	12.00
Environment	5	20.00	32.00
Social	1	4.00	36.00
Sustainability	1	4.00	40.00
Foreign	8	32.00	72.00
Other	3	12.00	84.00
Multiple	4	16.00	100.00
Total	25	100.00	

Lastly, Figure 2 presents the distribution of our dependent variable *horizontal integration* as a histogram, i.e., the number of line ministries represented in the national body for SDG implementation. We can see that the distribution of the data is skewed as we have more observations for small numbers than greater numbers. There are as many countries in which no line ministry is involved in the implementation process as countries in which a single line ministry is assigned this responsibility. This distributional property needs to be taken into account when fitting the estimation models. The mean value of ministries involved in the SDG implementation is two (with a standard deviation of 1.68). In sum, we can state that in the great majority of cases (i.e., 78 %), at least one line ministry is is represented in the national body for SDG implementation. As a result, we are confident that concentrating on the line ministries for examining the degree of horizontal integration is appropriate.

Figure 2: Histogram of the number of line ministries responsible for SDG implementation



Our indicator for the dependent variable *vertical integration* is the involvement of **Subnational Entities** in the implementation process. Our coding categories differentiate between membership in the national SDG implementation bodies themselves or membership in working groups that report to these national bodies, the involvement of these entities in the formulation of the SDGs, the provision of policy instruments, participating in the implementation of the SDGs, and other tasks. In most cases, the assigning of tasks to subnational entities correlates with these groups being members of SDG countries or working groups. As a result, the task dimension is not taken into consideration when we construct the variable. We construct our dependent variable by only taking into account the membership of subnational entities in corresponding forums without differentiating between councils and working groups.[8] The variable is coded binary, taking the value 1 if subnational entities are members of councils and/or working groups and 0 otherwise. This coding decision produces a variable that is distributed ideally for the subsequent logistic regression analysis: of the 62 cases, 30 are coded with 0 and 32 with 1, which leaves us with two groups of almost equal size.

Our fourth dependent variable *societal integration* refers to the involvement of **Civil Society**. Our coding scheme differentiates between of stakeholders from the categories science, business, development cooperation and intergovernmental organizations. With regard to the latter, considering that we have some least developed countries in our sample, we believe it is important to account for the involvement of this actor type. For the present analysis, we collapse these categories into a single category termed Civil Society, which produces a binary variable that

[8] Our original coding differentiates between working group membership and membership in national bodies for SDG implementation. However, for the purpose for this paper we collapsed these both forms of involvement into a single, binary variablefor methodological reasons.

contains positive outcomes (i.e., the variable is coded 1) in 40 cases and negative outcomes in 22 cases. The distribution is not as ideal as in the previous case of vertical integration, but still allows for the fitting of logistic regression models. The nice feature of this particular distribution is that we have double the number of positive outcomes than negative.

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics of the variables that enter our analyses as dependent or independent variables. The first three variables *horizontal integration*, *vertical integration* and *societal integration* serve as dependent variables, but they will also enter the analyses as explanatory variables. That set of variables is followed by *political leadership*, which takes the values 0 to 3, indicating whether no leadership of the implementation process is assigned (0), leadership is assigned to the CoG (1), to one or several line ministries (2), or in cases where there is a co-leadership by both CoG and line ministries (3).

It is worth examining the issue of political leadership in detail. In fact, in our sample of 62 countries, 32 assigned the leadership to the CoG, 16 to one or multiple line ministries, and nine assigned it jointly to the CoG and line ministries. The VNRs of five countries do not clarify the question of political leadership. Therefore, with regards to our first research question, we can highlight two features of the institutional design of the SDG implementation regime. First, the majority of countries assigned the leadership to the CoG. Second, the assignment of leadership to the CoG does not automatically entail that no or only a small number of line ministries are involved. As demonstrated above, we have an involvement of line ministries in about 78% percent of all cases. In most of these cases, it is the ministry of foreign affairs and/or the environment ministry that play a key role. We will examine more systematically whether the assignment of the leadership explains the number of line ministries involved.

An even more detailed insight is offered by Table 2, which gives an overview of the distribution of the individual countries along the following four dimensions. The vertical dimension is the number of line ministries assigned responsibility for the implementation of the SGS in the VNRs. The horizontal dimension captures combinations of three dimensions: the involvement of the CoG (CoG), the involvement of subnational entities in the relevant organizations and working groups (Vertical), and the involvement of the civil society (Civil). Given our interest in specific constellations of these three binary variables, we present the eight (2^3) possible constellations in which they can emerge. The most exclusive constellation is one where the CoG (= 0), the subnational entities (= 0) and civil society actors (= 0) are excluded from the process. The opposite, most inclusive scenario is one were all three dimensions have a value of 1. These two constellations could be considered as extreme types of institutional design choices for SDG implementation. The remaining categories are hybrid forms, that are still either exclusive (if only one dimension has the value 1) or more inclusive (if two dimensions have the value 1). It should be noted that a constellation in which only subnational entities are included is not observed in our data.

The largest group by far (with 26 cases) corresponds to the most inclusive types where the CoG, subnational entities and civil society organizations are included. Within this group, we have noticeable variation in the number of line ministries involved, ranging from none to the maximum number of line ministry involvement corresponding to six (Turkey). Remarkably, the second largest group refers to rather exclusive constellations in which only the CoG only and one or more line

ministries are involved. With this group, we also have more observations where greater number of ministries are involved. Two more constellations are worth mentioning: Switzerland and the Netherlands. In the case of Switzerland, we have no official involvement of other actors than line ministries. Despite the exclusive approach adopted by the Swiss government, the number of ministries is rather high with three. The institutional design in the Netherlands is also interesting as the VNR does neither mentions any line ministry nor a CoG institution as a member of the national body for SDG implementation.

Table 2: Patterns of institutional arrangements

	Exclusive							**Inclusive**
	CoG = 0 Vertical = 0 Social = 0	CoG = 1 Vertical = 0 Social = 0	CoG = 0 Vertical = 1 Social = 0	CoG = 0 Vertical = 0 Social = 1	CoG = 1 Vertical = 1 Social = 0	CoG = 0 Vertical = 1 Social = 1	CoG = 1 Vertical = 0 Social = 1	CoG = 1 Vertical = 1 Social = 1
Line ministry 0		Togo			India	Netherlands	Jordan Kenya Madagascar Malaysia	Benin Botswana Georgia Honduras Peru Uruguay Zimbabwe
Line ministry 1		Ethiopia Norway Portugal		Cyprus Luxembourg Panama	Denmark Philippines			Afghanistan Belize Czech Republic El Salvador Nepal Tajikistan
Line ministry 2		Costa Rica France Uganda					Qatar Sierra Leone	Belarus Finland Italy
Line ministry 3+	Switzerland	Azerbaijan Slovenia Bangladesh Egypt Mexico Monaco* Sweden Montenegro Morocco		Chile	Belgium Venezuela		Maldives South Korea Thailand	Brazil Colombia Estonia Germany Indonesia Argentina Guatemala Japan Nigeria Turkey
Sum	1	16	0	4	5	1	9	26

The next two variables gauge the socio-economic development level of the countries included in our sample. HDI 2016 contains the country ranks of the Human Development Index 2016. The greater the values reported in Table 3, the lower is the development level of the countries. Income Groups refers to the income categories of the World Bank, which differentiates between least developed countries (1) and high-income countries (5).

The subsequent variables all refer to the political system and are taken from the Quality of Government Cross Section dataset (Teorell et al. 2018).[9] Government Fractionalization (dpi_gf) assesses how united the Government is. A higher score indicates a greater probability of finding officials from different parties and thus more parties in government. Political Stability (GoG code: wbgi_pve) measures perceptions of the likelihood of political instability and/or politically motivated violence. Higher values indicate a higher perceived political stability. The next variable, Political System (dpi_system), differentiates between Presidential (0), Assembly-Elected President (1) and Parliamentary (2) systems. Federal is a binary variables differentiating between federal and unitary system constructed by means the variable "iaep_ufs" in the GoG-dataset. Subnational Independence is a binary variable coded 1 if there are independent sub-federal units (states, provinces, regions etc.) that impose substantive constraints on national fiscal policy (h_f). Fractionalization gauges the mean score of fractionalization due to ethnic groups (al_ethnic), different languages (al_language), and different religions (al_religion). Lastly, we use data originating from the V-Dem project indicating the degree of Participatory Democracy (vdem_partdem) and Liberal Democracy (vdem_libdem). Similar to previous measurement, higher values indicate higher levels of participatory or liberal democracy. The data is used as given and not modified by mathematical operations such as taking the natural logarithm.

[9] https://qog.pol.gu.se/data/datadownloads/qogstandarddata.

Table 3: Descriptive statistics

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Line Ministries	61	2.04918	1.67756	0	6
Subnational Entities	61	.5245902	.5035394	0	1
Civil Society	61	.6557377	.4790701	0	1
Leadership	61	1.442623	.8271354	0	3
Leadership CoG	61	.6557377	.4790701	0	1
Leadership Ministry	59	.4067797	.4954498	0	1
HDI 2016	61	80.57377	53.85024	1	179
Income Groups	61	3.655738	1.32772	1	5
Government Fractionalization	59	.2295011	.2773069	0	.8571429
Political Stability	61	-.0459424	.8973265	-2.411068	1.402653
Political System	60	.8333333	.9771398	0	2
Federal	57	.3508772	.4814868	0	1
Subnational independence	61	.1147541	.32137	0	1
Fractionalization	58	.9313531	.5338002	.1144819	2.063925
Participatory Democracy	59	.3970002	.1895301	.0482479	.672246
Liberal Democracy	59	.5025448	.2703668	.0596031	.886297
Deliberative Democracy	59	.4973692	.2791057	.0275823	.9121205

In light of the measurement level of the data and its distributional characteristics, we will fit maximum-likelihood based regression models for testing our hypotheses. For examining the determinants of horizontal integration, we will compute Poisson regression models for count data. The characteristics of the data allow for fitting regular Poisson model and do not requires Negative Binomial models or zero-inflated models. Turning to vertical and societal integration, the binary coding of the dependent variable requires the fitting of logistic regression models. Despite the relatively small number of observations, all models perform well. However, we had to adjust the estimation models slightly for the dependent variables in order to optimize the model fits.

5. Findings of the empirical analysis

We begin the discussion of our findings by inspecting the results of the Poisson models fitted in order to explain the number of line ministries involved in the implementation of the SDGs. The coefficients are reported as odds ratios and therefore take only positive values. Odds ratios smaller than 1 indicate a negative relationship between a covariate and the dependent variable

and odds ratios greater than 1 point to a positive relationship. As can be seen from Table 4, compared to high-income countries (reference category), being a poorer country reduces the odds for a greater number of line ministries being involved, given the other predictor variables in the model are held constant. Government fractionalization produces a significant coefficient only in one model and only at the 10 %-level. The assignment of political leadership also fails to produce coefficients that significantly different from zero at conventional levels of statistical significance. Political stability produces significant odds ratio smaller than 1 across all model specifications, indicating a negative relationship between stability and the degree of horizontal integration. A country's rank in the HDI 2016 is also important for explaining the number of line ministries involved. A higher rank score (i.e., a lower socio-economic development level) reduces the odds for a broader involvement of line ministries. As we can infer from Table 4, the variables gauging the type of the political system and the degree to which a country committed itself in the VNRs to vertical and societal integration fail to produce significant coefficients.

In sum, we can interpret from these findings that state capacity plays an important role for the number of ministries involved. The less affluent and developed a countries is, the fewer ministries will be involved in the SDG implementation process. The same logic holds true for politically stable countries, which are less likely to spread the competence for implementing the SDGs across many line ministries.

Table 4: Findings for horizontal integration

	Model 1 E(β)	Model 2 E(β)	Model 3 E(β)	Model 4 E(β)	Model 5 E(β)	Model 6 E(β)
Income Group 1[#]	0.357 (0.165)**		0.346 (0.160)**		0.323 (0.154)**	
Income Group 2[#]	0.056 (0.060)***		0.052 (0.055)***		0.057 (0.061)***	
Income Group 3[#]	0.422 (0.171)**		0.390 (0.170)**		0.432 (0.177)**	
Income Group 4[#]	0.635 (0.194)		0.604 (0.195)		0.651 (0.202)	
Government Fractionalization	1.823 (0.679)	1.752 (0.618)	1.827 (0.680)	1.746 (0.616)	1.939 (0.760)*	1.818 (0.664)
CoG leadership[#]	1.343 (0.588)	0.950 (0.422)	1.421 (0.674)	1.010 (0.515)	1.256 (0.562)	0.881 (0.398)
Ministry[#] leadership	2.026 (0.910)	1.374 (0.629)	2.159 (1.053)	1.468 (0.773)	1.758 (0.837)	1.210 (0.570)
Co-leadership[#]	1.219 (0.606)	0.947 (0.474)	1.262 (0.672)	1.003 (0.570)	1.064 (0.555)	0.823 (0.425)
Political Stability	0.529 (0.096)***	0.467 (0.088)***	0.527 (0.096)***	0.469 (0.089)***	0.522 (0.097)***	0.456 (0.088)***
HDI 2016		0.989 (0.003)***		0.989 (0.003)***		0.988 (0.003)***
Assembly elected[#] President[#]			1.109 (0.747)	1.182 (0.830)		

Parliamentary			0.891 (0.206)	0.971 (0.208)		
Subnational Entities					0.846 (0.203)	0.850 (0.183)
Civil Society					0.951 (0.210)	0.905 (0.188)
N	59	59	59	59	59	59
AIC	212.095	209.566	215.771	213.476	215.324	212.321

Notes: * p< 0.10, ** p < 0.05; *** p < 0.01. #Base categories: Income Group 5; No leadership Presidential.

Turning to vertical integration, we obtain the following findings (see Table 5). If line ministries are assigned the leadership in the SDG implementation process, the odds of including subnational entities in the relevant governing bodies are significantly lower. The odds of including subnational entities in the governance arrangements are about 6 times larger for federal states than the odds for unitary states; the odds ratios are significant at the 10 %-level. The odds ratio produces by government fractionalization are also significant at the 10 %-level, but only in three out of five models. Interestingly, a greater fractionalization also increases the odds for including subnational entities in the relevant governing bodies. Being among the poorest countries reduces the odds of involving subnational entities relative to being in the group of second-most poorest countries (reference group). Remarkably, while the number of line ministries involved does not possess any explanatory power for vertical integration, countries that involve the civil society have odds of including subnational entities that are between 12.8 and 14.2 larger than countries that abstain from involving civil society. Lastly, the political regime again fails to produce odds ratio that are significantly different from zero at conventional statistical levels.

Table 5: Findings for vertical integration

	Model 1 E(β)	Model 2 E(β)	Model 3 E(β)	Model 4 E(β)	Model 5 E(β)
Line Ministries	0.878 (0.203)			0.950 (0.244)	0.865 (0.231)
CoG Leadership	0.203 (0.226)	0.220 (0.242)	0.242 (0.297)	0.230 (0.287)	0.273 (0.363)
Ministry Leadership	0.049 (0.057)***	0.048 (0.055)***	0.048 (0.064)**	0.048 (0.065)**	0.053 (0.078)**
Federal	6.347 (6.278)*	6.544 (6.569)*	6.367 (6.698)*	6.264 (6.587)*	6.574 (7.211)*
Government Fractionalization	10.337 (16.070)	9.655 (15.102)	28.548 (54.155)*	29.057 (54.811)*	30.286 (61.149)*
Fractionalization	0.497 (0.541)	0.571 (0.612)	0.258 (0.335)	0.235 (0.323)	0.161 (0.223)
Subnational independence	0.143 (0.197)	0.126 (0.173)	0.278 (0.422)	0.294 (0.454)	0.182 (0.315)
Income Group 1#	0.009 (0.021)**	0.008 (0.018)**	0.011 (0.029)*	0.011 (0.029)*	0.004 (0.011)*
Income Group 3#	0.765 (1.321)	0.613 (1.032)	1.808 (3.349)	1.917 (3.575)	1.750 (3.330)
Income Group 4#	0.505 (0.829)	0.431 (0.694)	0.404 (0.666)	0.426 (0.709)	0.275 (0.470)
Income Group 5#	0.099 (0.193)	0.087 (0.169)	0.070 (0.148)	0.072 (0.152)	0.019 (0.046)*
Civil Society			13.286 (14.849)**	12.878 (14.484)**	14.230 (16.375)**
Parliamentary#					6.545 (7.700)
N	52	52	52	52	51
AIC	71.142	69.460	64.882	66.843	65.453

Notes: * p< 0.10, ** p < 0.05; *** p < 0.01. #Base categories: Income Group 2; Presidential (Assembly Elected President omitted).

As can be seen in Table 5, there is a relationship between vertical and societal integration, which is confirmed by the analysis presented in Table 6. As we can see, countries that involve subnational entities into the SDG implementation process have about 10 times greater odds of also involving civil society actors. The second variable that explains societal integration is the political system. Somewhat surprisingly, parliamentary systems compared to presidential system (reference category) have smaller odds of involving civil society. The odds ratios are significant at the 10 %-level and in all six model specifications.

Table 6: Findings for societal integration

	Model 1 E(β)	Model 2 E(β)	Model 3 E(β)	Model 4 E(β)	Model 5 E(β)	Model 6 E(β)
Subnational Entities	10.363 (9.175)***	9.803 (8.473)***	10.426 (9.127)***	10.363 (9.175)***	10.426 (9.127)***	22.790 (26.499)***
Line Ministries	0.715 (0.170)	0.717 (0.171)	0.711 (0.170)	0.715 (0.170)	0.711 (0.170)	0.714 (0.177)
CoG Leadership	0.213 (0.221)	0.207 (0.212)	0.214 (0.222)	0.213 (0.221)	0.214 (0.222)	0.128 (0.154)*
Ministry Leadership	0.645 (0.643)	0.609 (0.600)	0.662 (0.660)	0.645 (0.643)	0.662 (0.660)	0.516 (0.532)
Participatory Democracy	0.436 (0.914)			0.436 (0.914)		
Liberal Democracy		0.709 (1.030)				
Deliberative Democracy			0.511 (0.711)		0.511 (0.711)	
Parliamentary#	0.246 (0.192)*	0.236 (0.187)*	0.249 (0.193)*	0.246 (0.192)*	0.249 (0.193)*	0.173 (0.164)*
Income Group 1#						1.201 (1.767)
Income Group 3#						0.132 (0.175)
Income Group 4#						2.010 (2.198)
N	55	55	55	55	55	54
AIC	64.789	64.890	64.713	64.789	64.713	64.362

Notes: * p< 0.10, ** p < 0.05; *** p < 0.01. #Base categories: Income Group 2 (Income Group 5 omitted); Presidential (Assembly Elected President omitted).

Summing up, the analyses presented in Tables 3 through 6 reveal two important insights.

First, the national governments' willingness for broader horizontal integration mostly depends on capacity and political stability. With regard to the latter, it is not the less stable countries that tend to integrate less extensively horizontally, but the stable countries. The covariates gauging the characteristics of the political system did not produce any (robust) effects.

Second, while there is no relationship between horizontal integration and the other two types of integration, we could observe a stable and mutually enforcing relationship between vertical and societal integration. This finding suggests that the latter two dimensions are more similar than the first.

6. Conclusion

In this study, we posed two research questions. The first one referred to the empirical characterization of policy integration in the context of the SDGs. On the basis of the VNRs submitted to the United Nations in 2016 and 2017, we could show that there exist seven institutional design choices that national governments have taken. The great majority of countries has adopted an integrative approach that cuts across the CoG, line ministries, subnational entities and civil society. The second research question concerned the determinants of these patterns. Our findings revealed that horizontal integration becomes more likely with higher state capacity. When governments operate in a politically stable environment, they are less likely to spread the responsibility of implementing the SDGs across many different line ministries. Vertical integration and societal integration are interdependent and mutually enforcing. Our reasoning about the importance of preexisting institutional arrangements could not be confirmed.

In sum, we could witness some innovative approaches to the challenging task of attaining sustainable development. Evidently, in the present analysis, we could not discuss the performance of the respective institutional designs as the process of choosing institutional design is ongoing. Limitations of this study include the small database and the relatively crude measurement of our key concepts. The next step in this project will be to expand the dataset and to operationalize the data in a more refined manner. From a theoretical perspective, a promising way to improve this study to include various measurements of accountability. Altogether, this study represents the start rather than the closing stone of a theory-led empirical investigation of the SDGs and their implementations in view of attaining policy coherence.

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