Effective localization of the SDGs needs a collaborative mindset at local & national level

UNDESA Webinar Series on Effective Governance
and the Quintet of Change for the Implementation of
the Sustainable Development Goals
Webinar 5: Localization of the SDGs

17 September 2024

Prof Dr Louis Meuleman
Vice Chair United Nations Committee of Experts on Public Administration
Vice Chair Scientific Committee European Environment Agency
Visiting Professor Public Governance, Leuven University;
Director, Public Strategy for Sustainable Development, Brussels

1. With cascading crises of all kinds, the implementation of the 2030 Agenda will be more than ever about <u>collaboration</u>

Some national governments think that localization means **giving instructions and tasks** to local governments (decentralization)

Hierarchical governance

Top-down approach

agreement

Global/Regional Institutions

instructions

National government

instructions

Subnational government

instructions

Local government

With a top-down mindset you think that **giving instructions** is the best way of multilevel governance

But having just this one option is not very bright, as Maslov already said, and it is often **slow**

If you only have a hammer, every problem looks like a nail (A. Maslov)

'Fragile' by bb_matt (via Flickr). CC-BY licence.

Other national governments think that localization means **getting innovative ideas from empowered local authorities** (subsidiarity)

Market governance
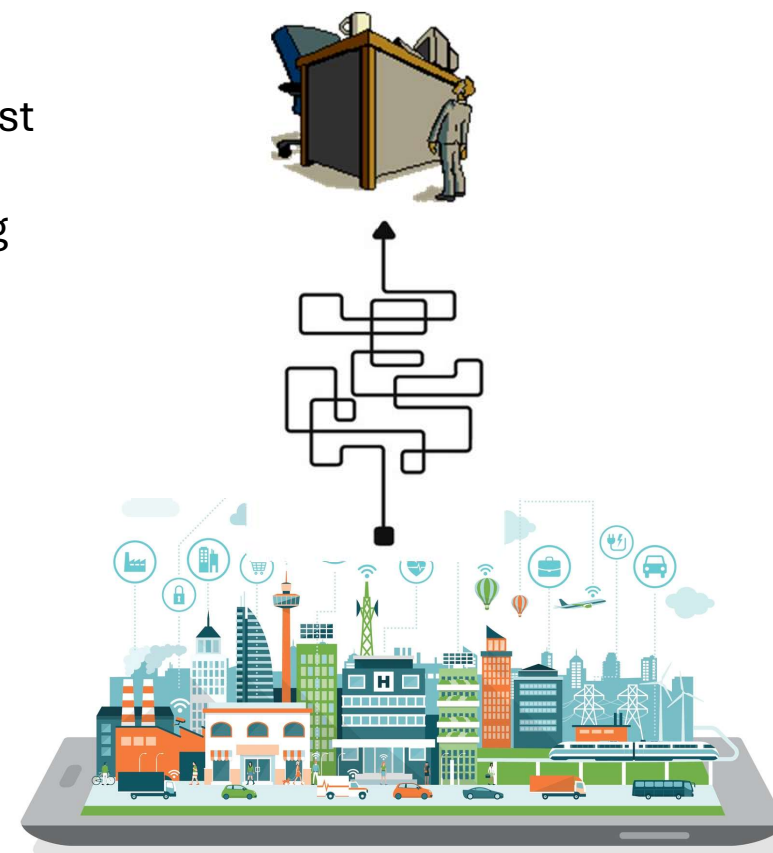
Subsidiarity approach

subsidiarity

Global/Regional Institutions

subsidiarity

National government

subsidiarity

Subnational government

subsidiarity

Local government
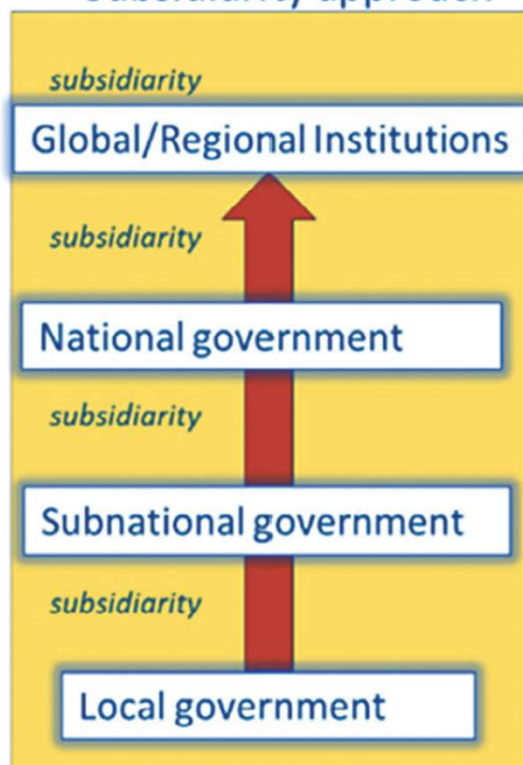
A bottom-up mindset is just **as one-directional** and **slow** as top-down thinking

It can take years before local innovation gets scaled-up and supported nationally, if at al

Both styles are useful but not enough: examples show that a **collaborative approach** can also work, and may be faster
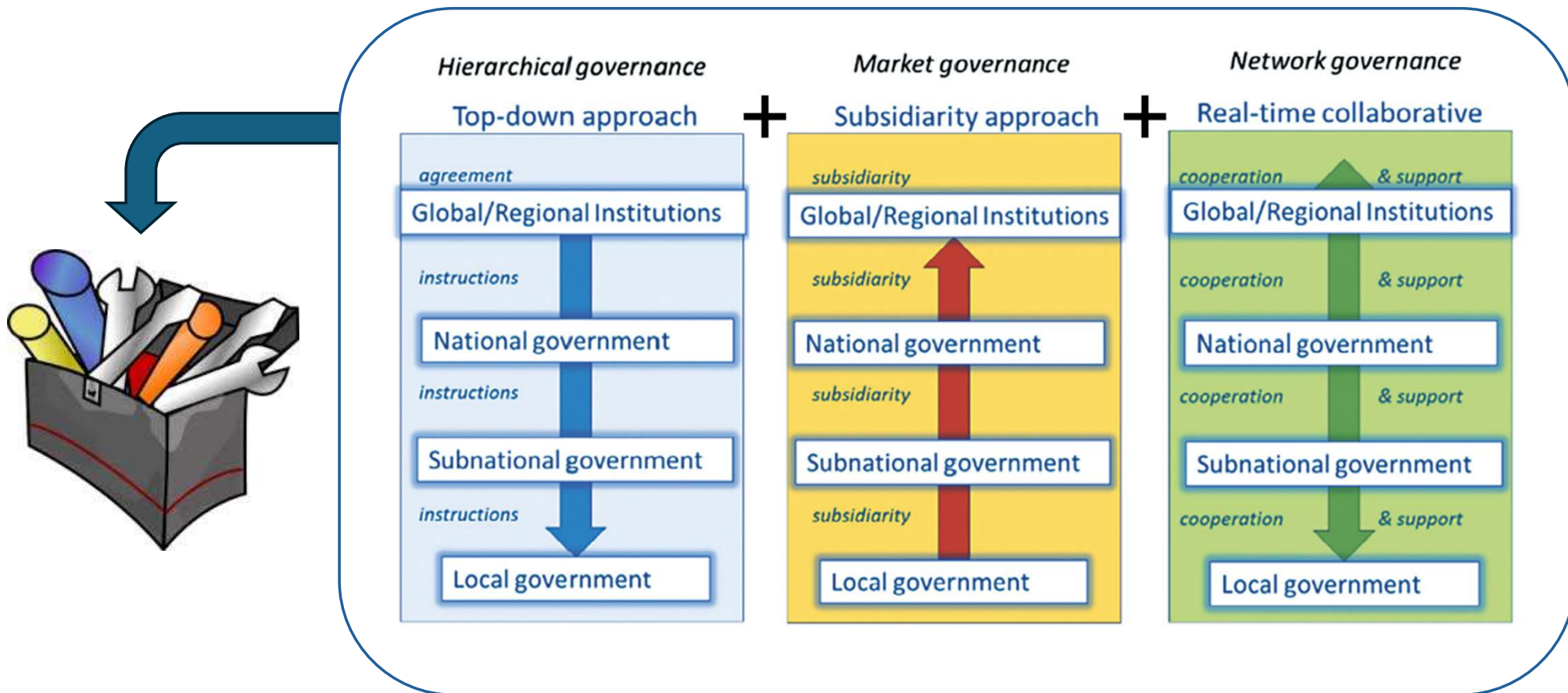
Network governance

Real-time collaborative

cooperation & support

Global/Regional Institutions

cooperation & support

National government

cooperation & support

Subnational government

cooperation & support

Local government

Working on complex challenges in **joint teams with experts from different levels in real time** is an additional approach that can be much **faster and more effective** than the two classical styles

Conclusion 1. A 'real-time' collaborative approach & mindset between national-local must become part of the 'toolbox'
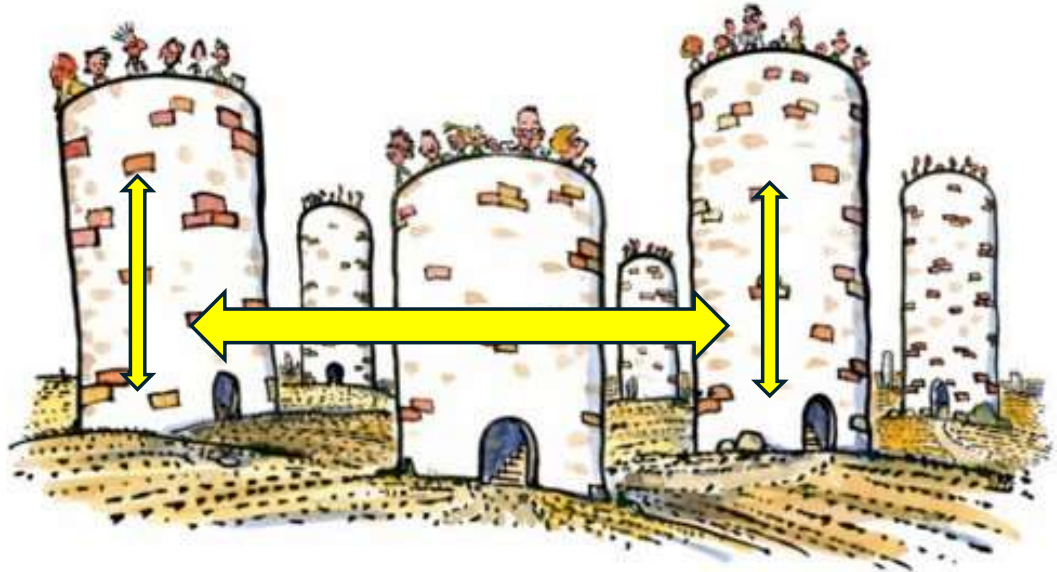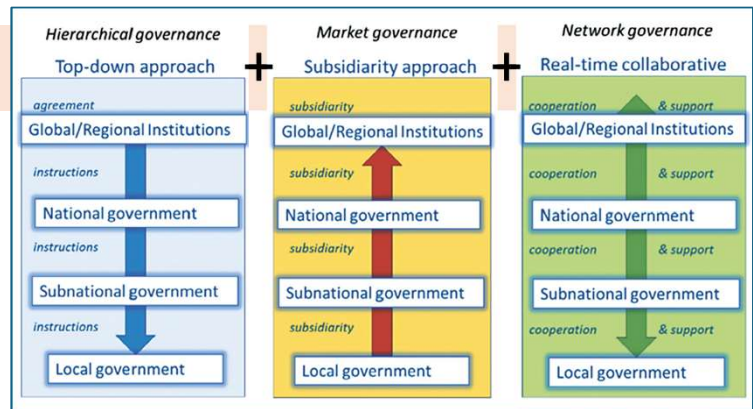
Why is this not (much) happening?

Hierarchical governance — Top-down approach
+ Market governance — Subsidiarity approach
+ Network governance — Real-time collaborative

1. Silo-thinking between administrations, within the same level AND between levels
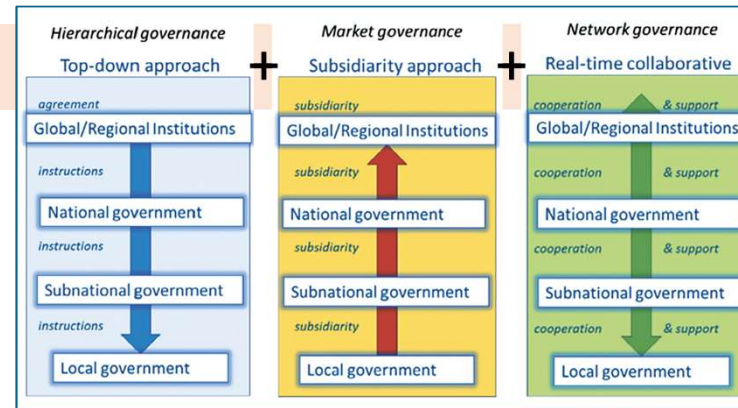
2. Indifference: Not understanding the mutual interest of national and local authorities

Frits Ahlefeldt

Why is this not happening?

3. Two **competing mindsets** at local level about the national level

Hierarchical governance / Market governance / Network governance diagram (Top-down approach + Subsidiarity approach + Real-time collaborative)

Positive:

"**Cities** are enablers, innovators, and the main public service providers for citizens.

National government must support us with resources and the liberty to experiment"
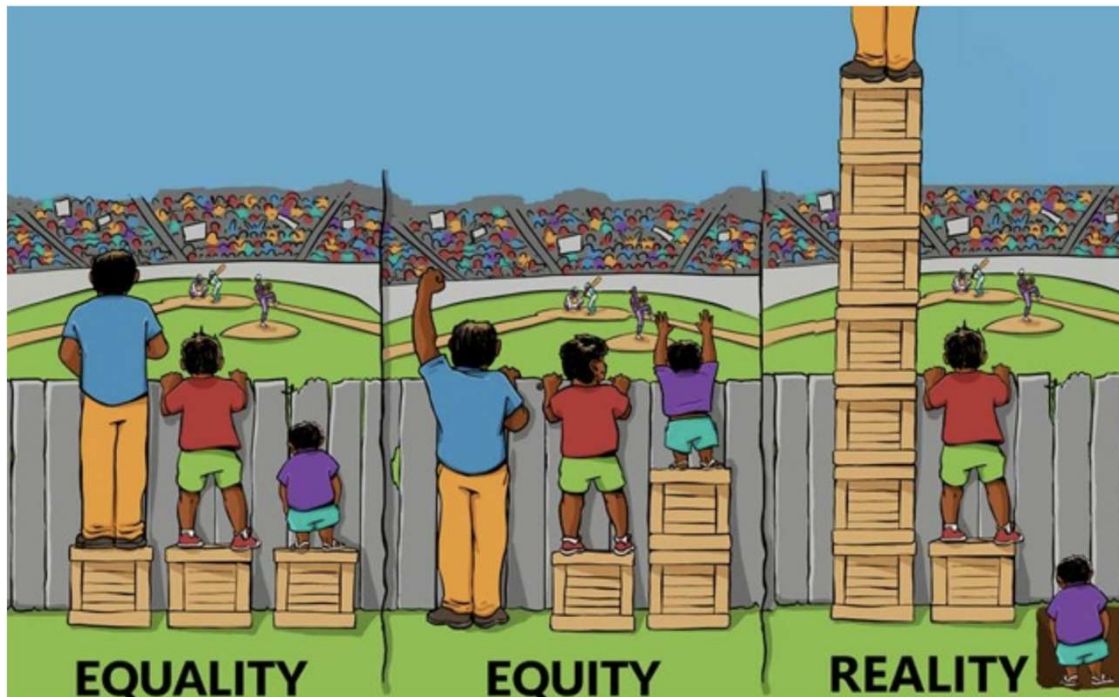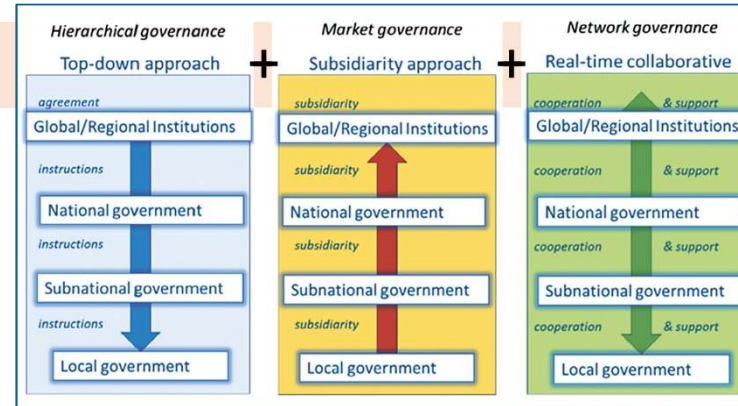
National

Local
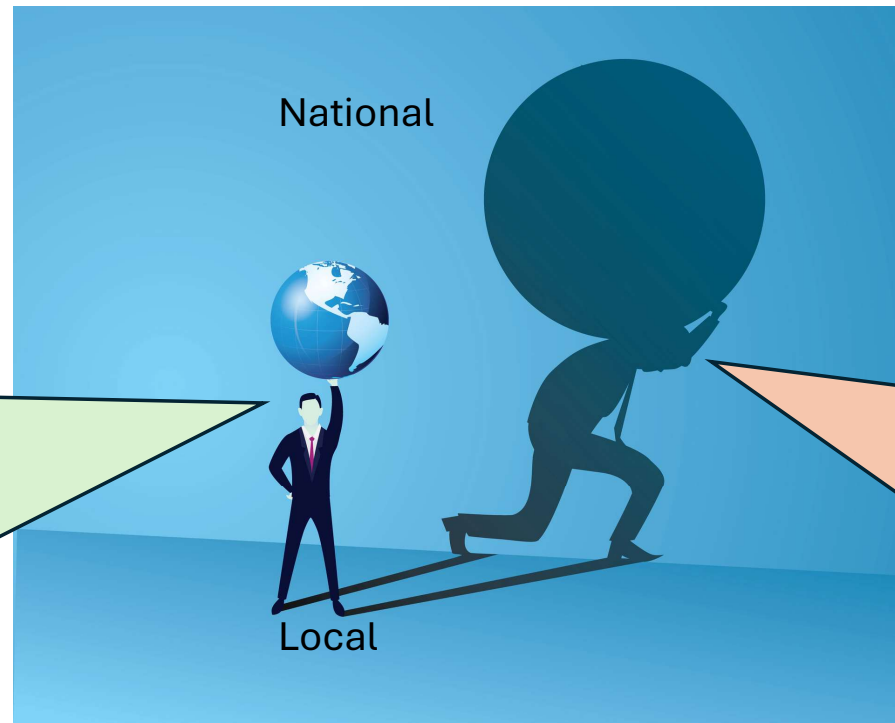
Negative:

"**Cities** carry the weight, are suppressed and legally restricted to act.

National government sees us as too expensive, insubordinate, unreliable"

Why is this not happening?

4. Not understanding that
collaboration on equal footing is
about **equity, not equality**

2. Challenges related to **capacity building, data availability and monitoring mechanisms** at the local level

It is a **misunderstanding** that local indicators and data can just emerge through **disaggregation** of national indicators and data

This can result in **meaningless data....** and wrong decisions based on them

2. How to address challenges related to **capacity building, data availability and monitoring mechanisms** at the local level?

Good example: project by Joint Research Centre of the European Commission in some European regions/provinces, focusing on indicators and data for Voluntary Local Review processes

European Commission

SDG localisation and multi-level governance: lessons from the Basque Country

A sub-national approach for better governance through SDGs

Andoni Hidalgo Simón

Alice Siragusa and Paola Proietti (eds.)

2021

https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/bitstream/JRC124586/hidalgo_%25282021%2529_sdg_localisation_and_multi-level_governance.pdf
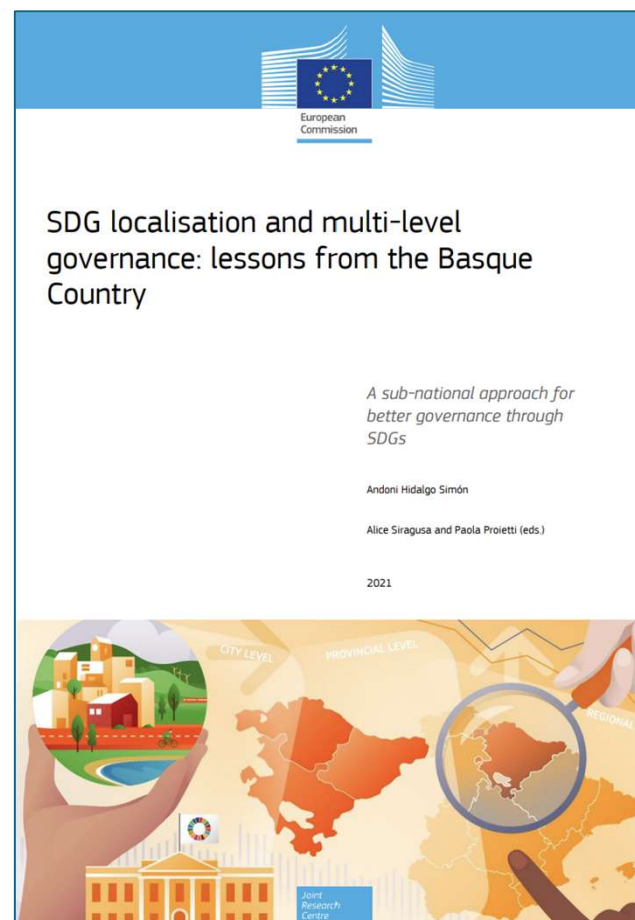
Conclusion 2. Meaningful and reliable data for localization should be <u>mostly made locally</u> (or as joint action of subnational authorities)
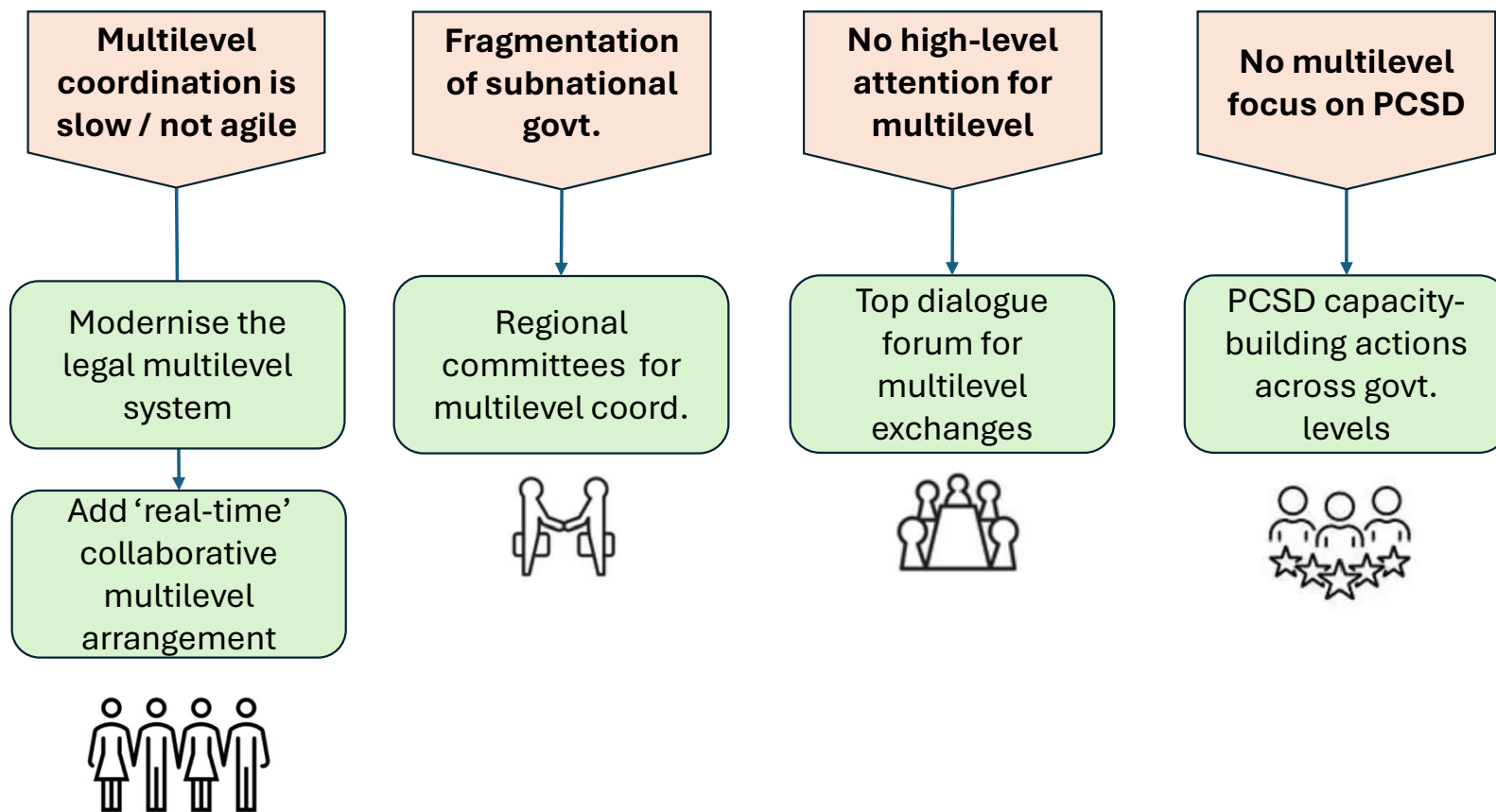
3. <u>Alignment</u> between national development plans and localized SDG strategies

Challenges and some solutions

Multilevel coordination is slow / not agile

Fragmentation of subnational govt.

No high-level attention for multilevel

No multilevel focus on PCSD

Modernise the legal multilevel system

Regional committees for multilevel coord.

Top dialogue forum for multilevel exchanges

PCSD capacity-building actions across govt. levels

Add 'real-time' collaborative multilevel arrangement

[Handbook on](#) **Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development (PCSD) (Indicator 17.14.1)** (UNEP, July 2024):
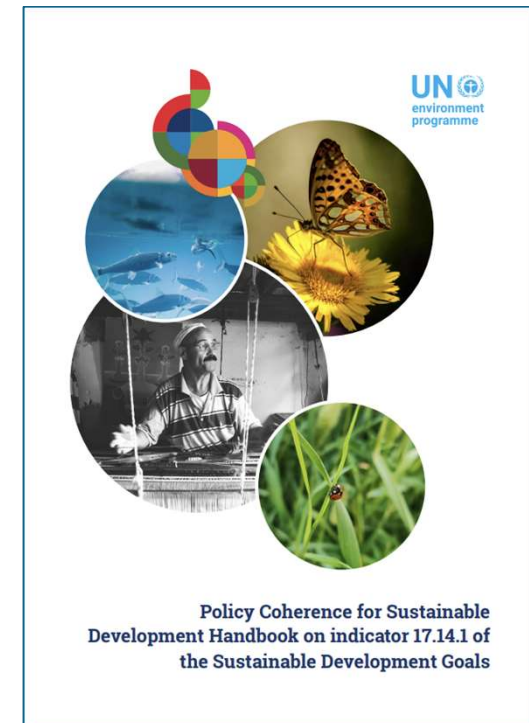
Dimension 6. **Consultation and coordination across government levels**:
"The country has mechanisms in place for aligning priorities, policies and plans across the various levels of government".
Examples:

- **The Government of Burkina Faso** has decided to bring the implementation and monitoring system of the SDGs into the National Economic and Social Development Plan, which envisions cooperation between the national and local levels.
- **The Inter-Ministerial Conference for Sustainable Development in Belgium** is a multilevel panel that comprises federal, regional and community ministers responsible for sustainable development.

Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development Handbook on indicator 17.14.1 of the Sustainable Development Goals

Conclusion 3. Multilevel alignment for localization is supported by *Policy Coherence for SD* at national and local level
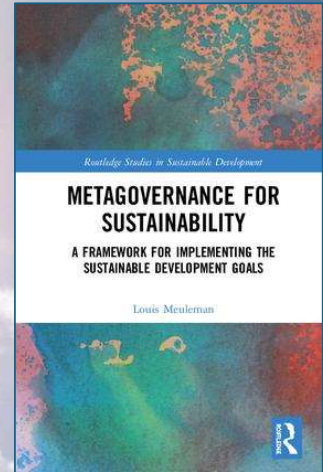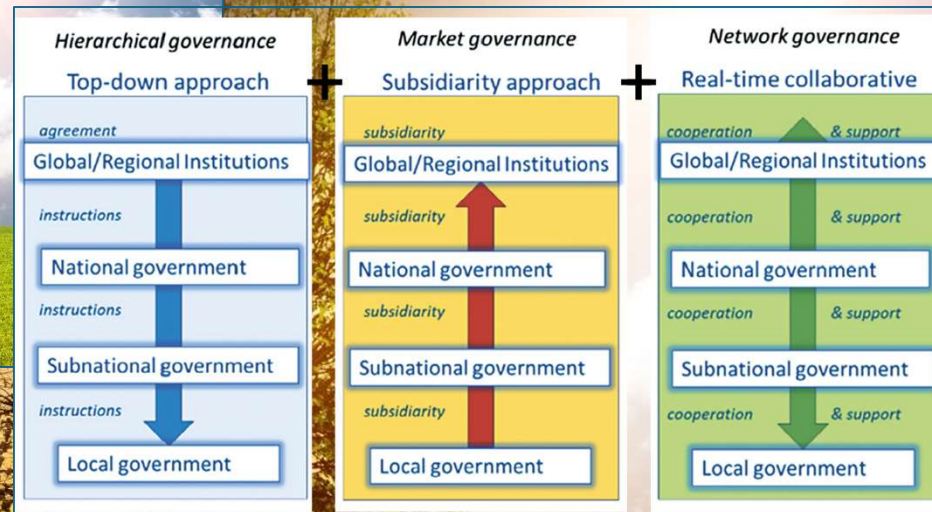
Conclusions

1. A **'real-time' collaborative approach & mindset** between national-local must become part of the 'toolbox'

2. **Meaningful and reliable data for localization** should be mostly made locally (or as joint action of subnational authorities)

3. 3. **Multilevel alignment for localization** is supported by Policy Coherence for SD at national and local level

Effective localization of the SDGs needs a collaborative mindset at local & national level

UNDESA Webinar Series on Effective Governance
and the Quintet of Change for the Implementation of
the Sustainable Development Goals
Webinar 5: Localization of the SDGs

17 September 2024

Prof Dr Louis Meuleman
Vice Chair United Nations Committee of Experts on Public Administration
Vice Chair Scientific Committee European Environment Agency
Visiting Professor Public Governance, Leuven University;
Director, Public Strategy for Sustainable Development, Brussels

Hierarchical governance	Market governance	Network governance
Top-down approach	Subsidiarity approach	Real-time collaborative

METAGOVERNANCE FOR SUSTAINABILITY

A FRAMEWORK FOR IMPLEMENTING THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Louis Meuleman

Thank you for your attention

E: louismeuleman@ps4sd.eu

www.ps4sd.eu

https://www.routledge.com/Metagovernance-for-Sustainability-A-Framework-for-Implementing-the-Sustainable/Meuleman/p/book/9780815370161