



School of Politics & International Relations
Working Paper Series: WP14/2019



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Parliamentary Governance for Sustainable
Development

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Abstract

In 2015, the adoption of resolution A/RES/70/1 2030, Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (UN Agenda 2030) was an important statement of future intent for UN member states. The Agenda touches the entire geography of the globe covering potentially all aspects of how society, economy, the environment and the polity are organized. The working philosophy of our approach is based on the existing open governance adopted by the UN HLPF at a global level. We wish to explore a form of interoperability of public policy dialogues at national and global levels. By exploring HLPF structures in national parliaments and making them interoperable with the UN HLPF we are proposing how a body like the UN HLPF can induce 'whole-of-society' participation at different levels, but particularly at the binding level of the nation-state. This has the potential to create very effective global 'whole-of-society' partnerships, led by governments that set, implement and review sustainable development public policies around the globe. We will use Ireland as a case study to show how our proposals might be integrated to the existing policymaking processes without being overtly disruptive.

Key words: Sustainable development, UN, Global governance, environment, partnerships

Citation:

This paper should be cited as Patrick Paul Walsh, Enda Murphy, David Horan, and Aparajita Banerjee (2019) The UN High-Level Political Forum and Parliamentary Governance for Sustainable Development, SPIRE Working Paper WP14, School of Politics & International Relations, UCD, Ireland.

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Introduction

In 2015, the adoption of resolution A/RES/70/1 2030, Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (UN Agenda 2030), as an historic and wide-ranging inter-governmental policy agreement was an important statement of future intent for UN member states. The Agenda touches the entire geography of the globe covering potentially all aspects of how society, economy, the environment and the polity are organized. As an ambitious agenda it aims to address the unsustainable nature of existing development practices and build a livable future for generations yet to come via 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 targets. The SDGs are considered indivisible and applicable equally to all members states irrespective of the any nation's stage of development. Compared to the Millennium Development Goals project, the SDGs are more comprehensive as they address the social, economic, environmental and governance pillars of sustainable development. They also emphasize the need to address all the goals in an integrated manner, through global, regional, national and local partnership approaches, alongside a vision, means of implementation and a follow up and review mechanism.

However, the key weakness of the 2030 Agenda lies in the fact that the SDGs and associated targets are non-binding for all 193 signatory nations which undermines the veracity of the agreement and the prioritization of SDG implementation among national governments. The immediate challenge, therefore, lies in finding ways to encourage, steer, and indeed pressurize policymakers to pursue the goals and targets through national implementation plans and policies that induce partnerships within and between countries. Innovative and effective governance structures capable of steering the implementation process in every nation is necessary (Scholz et al., 2016). Our argument is that this is a necessary building bloc to induce a new wave of multilateralism where partnerships within nations contribute to global partnerships lead by coalitions of governments.

Governance for sustainable development is described as “the steering requirements and mechanisms that enable the formulation of concerted and adaptive policies that foster the cooperation of diverse actors in delivering sustainable development” (Pisano et al. 2015, p.58). In other words, governments cannot do it alone given the nature and complexities of the goals. Participatory arrangements are required where various stakeholders from civil society, academia, businesses, women organizations, and the like, can participate in the policy-making process as well as share responsibilities in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the targets under each goal. Creating such participatory platforms can also provide flexibility in the adoption of policies as the ‘whole-of-society’ continues to learn from each step of the way together, respond to policy problems, and jointly maneuver impending challenges.

Not surprisingly, countries focused on implementing the SDGs have incorporated different ways to include stakeholders in the implementation process ranging from gathering information from the stakeholders to more deliberative consultative actions (DeVries 2015).

Evidence suggests that a ‘one size fits all’ approach is simply inappropriate to plan for sustainability (Schelly and Banerjee, 2018). Thus, there is an urgent need to explore and

outline different approaches that have the potential to make space for ‘whole-of-society’ participation at different levels and various levels of interactions. In this paper, we explore spaces or entry points for country-level major groups and other stakeholders to engage in the different heuristic stages of SDG policy-making at a national level. In particular, entry points into parliamentary decision making.

There is a clear interdependency that we wish to explore in this paper between the UN High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) and national level “whole-of-society” implementation. The working philosophy of our approach is based, to a large degree, on the existing open governance adopted by the UN HLPF at a global level. We wish to explore a form of interoperability of public policy dialogues at national and global levels. Outcome documents, such as ministerial and leaders’ declarations, at the UN are not binding while parliamentary committees at national levels are pathways to legislative change are binding. By exploring HLPF structures in national parliaments and making them interoperable with the UN HLPF we are proposing how a body like the UN HLPF can induce ‘whole-of-society’ participation at different levels, but particularly at the binding level of the nation-state. This has the potential to create very effective global ‘whole-of-society’ partnerships, led by governments that set, implement and review sustainable development public policies around the globe.

We first review the role and functions of the UN HLPF. Then we explain in detail our proposed hybrid parliamentary committees (HPCs) and how it would provide a participatory space for non- governmental major groups along with exploring possibilities to legitimize them by making the government obligated to consider their inputs in the policymaking-process related to the UN 2030 Agenda in the same spirit of the UN HLPF. We argue that implementation of such an approach at national levels will induce a more effective UN HLPF that will produce a more effective global partnership for sustainable development lead by government in a new wave of multilateralism.

As global, or interstate, challenges worsen, governments alone do not have the finance or capacity to address the problems such as climate change. A new wave of multilateralism in the forms of a global partnership lead by governments is badly needed. Getting national-level parliamentary committees focused on sustainable development with non-government check and balances is an important first and necessary step that this paper explores in more detail. We will use Ireland as a case study to show how our proposals might be integrated to the existing policymaking processes without being overtly disruptive.

UN High-Level Political Forum

In 2013, the HLPF emerged out of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+ 20) with the mandate “to provide political leadership, integrate the environmental, economic and social dimensions of sustainable development, encourage policy coherence, review progress, and promote implementation of the wide-ranging public and private commitments made since 1992” (Abbott and Bernstein 2015, p. 223). Additionally, the HLPF is also a platform where major groups and other stakeholders identified as crucial to the implementation of Agenda 2030 have an opportunity to participate in follow-up and review, agenda-setting and implementation (Strandenaes 2014). Nation-states present their Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) to the HLPF with a

goal to share experiences, identify emerging best practices, and learn from the challenges and critical lessons that emerge from the process of SDG implementation planning and policymaking in different countries. The core focus of the HLPF is the implementation of the SDGs, and all its actions are channeled towards implementing the 17 goals in member countries and assisting with the myriad of challenges that arises from goal monitoring and implementation.

The HLPF is also one of the most inclusive intergovernmental entities. General Assembly resolution 67/290 decides that, while retaining the intergovernmental character of the forum, the representatives of the major groups and other relevant stakeholders shall be allowed: attend all official meetings of the forum; have access to all official information and documents; intervene in official meetings; submit documents and present written and oral contributions; to make recommendations; to organize side events and round tables, in cooperation with Member States and the Secretariat. The quadrennial meetings under the UNGA result in negotiated political declarations whereas the annual meetings under the ECOSOC result in ministerial declarations that go directly to the UNGA even though declarations remain legally non-binding (Abbott and Bernstein, 2015).

Though the HLPF has very ambitious goals, the financial and budgeting resources provided to the Forum is insufficient for its scale and responsibility. Moreover, the HLPF does not have an autonomous bureau or a secretariat and relies heavily on the resources of the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA). The result of these deficiencies is that the HLPF functions only as the caretaker of the SDGs. Despite this, there are numerous proposals for improving its design (cf. Beisheim, 2014). Abbott and Bernstein (2015) argue that the role of the HLPF is that of an orchestrator. According to them, orchestrators use indirect and soft governance strategies to encourage nation-states to take their SDG commitments seriously. Hard governance strategies of control like mandates, treaties, or regulations are replaced with collaboration and cooperation. Thus, the HLPF does not adopt any formal agreements or provide recommendations. The HLPF have set an expectation of appropriate behavior for participating nations. This is achieved via the provision of an inclusive platform for nation-states and major groups and other stakeholders to report and review how each country is implementing the SDGs at regular time intervals.

The sixth annual Sustainable Development Transition Forum (SDTF), hosted by the United Nations Office for Sustainable Development of UNDESA, welcomed 130 representatives and experts of country governments, the United Nations System, policy think tanks, academic institutions and civil society from around the world in Incheon, Republic of Korea, October 2018, to discuss how to enhance the role of the UN HLPF in accelerating progress towards the sustainable development goals (SDGs).

Some of the key insights emerging from the 2018 SDTF were the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development represents an important instrument for strengthening multilateralism as the Agenda and SDGs can be achieved only through collaborative effort of all countries and stakeholders. The HLPF has established itself as the global platform for follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda reflecting implementation at all levels and of all actors. However, strengthening political guidance, outcomes, including a more action

oriented ministerial declaration that reflects actual discussions at the HLPF and incorporating outcomes and policy guidance from different constituencies –business, parliamentarians, local governments, educational institutions is important. The declaration should be a more whole of society outcome. While the national level Voluntary National Review Process (VNR) does strengthen political will, national ownership and focused attention to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and engaged governments and stakeholders around the Agenda. Nations can go further to establish new forms of coordination and adapt or create new institutions to strengthen the whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach.

Stakeholders are an essential part of implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Institutionalizing engagement of stakeholders at all levels is essential. Stronger engagement of stakeholders at the national level will also result in a stronger engagement at the regional and global levels. In this regard, it is important to strengthen capacity of stakeholders including at local and community levels. Equally important would be to find ways to strengthen official engagement of all stakeholders at the HLPF.

The 2018 Incheon Outcome document from the SDTF summarizes well our approach in this paper. Hence we outline our approach to national level SDG implementation in the next section that we enhance the ability of the UN HLPF to be more effective.

Hybrid Parliamentary Committees (HPCs)

Similar to the role that the HLPF plays at the UN level, Walsh (2016) proposed the idea of the HPC as one “that could be in part inter-governmental, inter-political party; inter-major groups and other stakeholders and, finally, could include the general public using e-consultations” (p.14) that can be adopted at the nation-state level. At the heart of these committees lies neo-pluralism that empowers non-state actors as agents of change, shifting from the typical approach of state actors alone. It is a space where different non-state actors can participate with state actors to reduce externalities and incoherence in policy decisions that can affect long-term sustainability. Like the HLPF, the core focus of HPCs would be the implementation of the SDGs by following the 169 targets, adjusting to new challenges, and adopting solutions within or beyond the scope of these targets. The idea is that HPCs would become a platform where the legislators can communicate, consult, and engage with major groups and stakeholders on the one hand, while on the other, the non-state actors can play critical roles in policies that affect their cause.

Building on the work of Walsh (2016), strong representation from other parliamentarians in charge of different government departments and ministries along with regional and local authorities in the HPCs is critical to both horizontal and vertical policy integration. Participation from other parliamentarians or the legislative wing would assist in representation, legislation, and oversight. People elect members of the legislature, and they ideally carry the voices of the people so that they reach the policy agenda-setting stage. Therefore, their representation and leadership are necessary for policy-making and driving policy implementation. In other words, their participation and oversight are necessary to create the political will, opportunities for policy-making and the implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of the policies.

Walsh (2016) also points out that when policy-makers devise policies that relate to the social, economic, or environmental pillars of sustainable development, more often than not, relevant government departments and levels of the government do not participate in the processes. Fulfilling the objectives of Agenda 2030 and the SDGs requires an inter-play between all governmental departments. This note only makes for more holistic policy-making and all-round 'buy-in' but also ensures that spillovers to other domains are considered in policy implementation. Necessary conditions for creating policies for SDGs would require coordination mechanisms capable of integrate both the vertical and horizontal organizational dimensions both within government departments and right across the different levels of government. For example, economic policies that promote economic growth should consider social equity issues as well as their environmental impacts in such a way that no domain is compromised in the pursuit of policy goals. Inter-governmental representation in the HPC has the potential to prevent that from happening as each government department can provide feedback on spillover implications. Therefore, HPCs can enhance communications between the policy actors operating within a nation's government.

Making allowance for inter-party representation in the HPCs also fills other gaps. In many nations, political leadership often concentrates on short- and medium-term goals because they are unsure of being in government after the next electoral cycle. Chances are that most avoid those policies whose affect can be felt by the electorate years down the line (Persson and Tabellini, 2002). This means that the benefits derived from long-term policy thinking are often under or unexplored. However, inter-party representation can contribute to the continuity of policy goals and objectives through shared visions and planning. Inter-party representation can also help the new political leadership to pursue policies of the erstwhile political leadership they replace in electoral cycles. Therefore, the execution and attainment of the goals would remain constant even with changes in leadership.

Finally, taking cues from the UN HLPF, building country-level partnerships with subsystem actors belonging to private and non-governmental public domains can be critical to the HPCs. Therefore, in our proposal it is important that country-level major groups and other stakeholders participate in the HPCs. Walsh (2016) points out that "the real benefit of incorporating major groups into the policy work of government is that financial markets, companies, NGOs and civil society organizations will be encouraged to change their governance structure and policies to help a bottom-up movement which is enabled by government-led committee work" (p. 16). The benefits are three-fold; first, major groups and other stakeholders are expected to be less critical of policies in which they had a direct input and this is likely to maximize policy acceptability and adoption. Second, major groups would share the burden of implementation as well as creating their own structures and organizational changes to deliver on their shared implementation responsibilities. Major groups can set their democratic processes where they can elect their representations in the HPCs. Members interested in becoming part of the HPCs can campaign within the major stakeholder groups thus increasing greater dialogues between and within stakeholder groups. These processes would encourage stakeholder groups to gain a greater understanding of the interplay necessary within them as well. In the end, their inputs go into

agendas of the new policies that will incentivize the uptake of greater responsibility to plan long term for society and the environment, both at home and abroad. Thirdly, there is an inherent challenge in maintaining a delicate balance so that policies are democratic but also evidence-based via the infusion of expert knowledge. Hence the status quo science policy interface can be weak. The SDGs need technological intensive transformations. Having science outside the decision-making process is inherently damaging to generating effective sustainable development policy-making. Kingdon (1995) identifies how a policy problem can be solved from different groups including bureaucrats, congressional staff members, academia, and researchers working to collect science-based evidence to affect policy changes. These partnerships need to be formalized and given entitlements in governance structures. Again taking a cue from the UN Global Sustainable Development Report, building academic and scientific inputs can be critical to the success of HPCs.

However, parliamentarians would continue to play a critical role in the HPCs, the leadership of the committees would use soft power to maintain a balance between the government and other members. There is a need for diplomatic processes to emerge that link sustainability issues across scales, scopes, and actors (Biermann and Pattberg, 2008). The inter-party representation, of the major stakeholders and even citizen participation through e-consultation platforms can arguably balance the imbalances in the system from the dominant representation of the government. Overall, HPCs have the potential to bring systematic changes in how government, social, economic, and environmental institutions operate because participants would evolve and integrate kind of holistic thinking that is required for the implementation of SDGs. Additionally, mixing horizontal and vertical inputs, the HPCs of different countries can build up their networks to share their own experiences and, in the process, learn from each other. Given that the UN 2030 Agenda aim is to leave no one behind and care for our common home for use in future generations, there is a need to organize governance structures, so these principles are binding on policy-making. This will maximize the potential for achieving the goals at home. In addition, the presence and participation of these national level partnerships create the building blocks for a new wave of multi-lateral global partnerships lead by governments.

Even in the status quo, public policy theorists have found that policies are not made in vacuum and are influenced by non-state actors with interest in a policy issue. Jenkins-Smith and Sabatier (1999) in their work on Advocacy Coalitions Framework (ACF) found that a complex subsystem of actors belonging to diverse groups of public and private organizations operate within the policy arena. These actors come from administrative agencies, legislative committees, interest groups, researchers, media, and local government authorities (ibid). These groups of actors can form coalitions with each other or can support each other in their policy interest. These “lobby” groups can be very effective in driving or restricting policy change. Public policy-entrepreneurs can work within and outside the government so that the issues, concerns, and solutions they champion get into policy-agenda setting (Baumgartner and Jones 2010).

Providing governance structures that allow all major groups to represent themselves, elected by their constituents, and deliberate on SDG-related policy creates policymaking that is more socially inclusive, environmentally friendly and creates economic propensity for all.

Moreover, such a platform can provide the government with a better insight into the political mood of the nation as many of the members of the major groups represent citizen-initiated efforts. The buy in of the policies should create political dividends and more ownership of the policies at the implementation stage. The universal membership of the HPCs, borrowing from UN HLPF structures, provide scope for all voices to be heard and can help in maintaining a balance between the major groups in the political realm of a nation-state. Like the UN HLF the committee outcomes and recommendations will be adopted, or not, in the chamber of the legislators.

Case of Ireland

To fortify our argument with empirical evidence, we take the case of Ireland. Walsh (2016) points out that, from time to time, Ireland has engaged stakeholder groups in policy-making processes.

Ireland is a constitutional republic with a parliamentary system of government. The Oireachtas, the bicameral national parliament, is composed of two Houses: Seanad Eireann (Senate) and Dail Eireann (House of Representatives). The Dail has 158 members elected to represent multi-seat constituencies under the system of proportional representation. Parliamentary elections are typically held every five years and it has been customary since 1989 for coalitions to form a government. The current government in 2019 is held in place by a confidence and supply deal with the main opposition party. The Seanad is composed of sixty members, with eleven nominated by the Taoiseach (Prime Minister), six elected by the graduates of the National University of Ireland and the University of Dublin and 43 elected by public representatives.

In general, the legislative process involves several distinct stages. First, a bill may be initiated by a Representative of either House. When a Bill is presented, provided it complies with Standing Orders, it automatically proceeds to Second Stage, during which the general principles of the Bill are debated in the House. Members are allocated a limited amount of time to make a statement on the law the Bill would create. They may also suggest other provisions to be included in the Bill. If agreed, the Bill is assigned to a committee, comprising government and opposition representatives. The Bill is then examined section by section and amendments may be made. In the Report Stage, amendments arising out of Committee Stage are considered. When all the amendments have been dealt with, the Bill is received for final consideration. When a Bill passes the final Stage in the House in which it was initiated, it is sent to the other House. If passed, the Bill is signed into law by the President.

In principle, there are multiple entry points for stakeholders in the legislative process. Stakeholders could be engaged at each stage of the process influencing, for example, the initiation of a bill, its debate in parliament, committee amendments, the final report, voting in both Houses, the enactment stage. This raises several questions about *both* the effectiveness, legitimacy and overall desirability of stakeholder engagement in the legislative process. For example, which entry points for stakeholders are the most important for ensuring effective policy-making and which institutional structures have the right to engage with stakeholders? In the last section we propose a presence at the committee stage.

In practice, there are no formal rules obligating government to involve stakeholders in the legislative process and most of the stakeholder engagement that does occur happens in the pre-legislative stage focusing on consultation, technical assistance and advisory services. For instance, before the Government publishes a Bill, there is usually a consultation process. The relevant department may publish a Green Paper setting out the government's ideas and invite opinions from individuals and organizations. For example, the Green Paper on Energy Policy in Ireland was launched in May 2014 and 1,200 submissions were made during the consultation process. The relevant Oireachtas committee may invite stakeholders to participate in the pre-legislative scrutiny of a new law by attending committee meetings to discuss the heads of the Bill. For example, during the pre-legislative scrutiny of the Adoption (Information and Tracing) Bill 2015, the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Health and Children heard from adoptive parents, birth mothers, birth parents, foster parents and adoption agencies.

To date, Ireland's experience with non-governmental inputs into committee structures has largely occurred in the bureaucratic side of government rather than in the legislative process. One example of such a committee is the Oversight Group for the National Action Plan of Women, Peace and Security (2015-2018) with representation across government departments such as the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Department of Justice and Equality, Department of Defense, Defense Forces, An Garda Síochána, Permanent Representation of Ireland to the European Union, Health Services Executive, civil society, academic and independent experts. However, rather than being mainstream, this type of committee structure is rare in agenda setting, policy formulation or implementation. This committee is both inter-governmental and inter-sectoral, involving representatives from civil society and academia as well as independent experts. It is responsible for reporting and reviewing progress on the second National Action Plan of Women, Peace and Security 2015-18, revising actions and targets in light of emerging issues and lessons learnt, and working with the appropriate Oireachtas committee to ensure the involvement of parliamentarians in the implementation of the Action Plan.

One major problem with these approaches to involving stakeholders is that stakeholder inputs in the bureaucratic side of government (whether in agenda setting, policy formulation or implementation) often get blocked in the legislative process. Specifically, there is a lack of checks and balances on the actions of legislators. Most of the detailed examination of a bill occurs at the committee stage, yet Ireland's parliamentary committees consist only of elected representatives. Government and opposition members have the opportunity to make amendments to the text, and the committee stage can be lengthy as there is no limit to the number of times a member may speak on an amendment. Parliamentary committees do invite expert statements and ask questions to the bureaucratic side of government and non-governmental stakeholders. Elected representatives have full control of the process.

Another example is the current arrangements for engaging stakeholders in Ireland's SDG plans. These arrangements are limited to consultation and a Stakeholder Forum. The Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment has lead responsibility for promoting and overseeing national implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Up to now, this has largely been a "whole-of-government initiative". The relatively short time frames provided for the completion of Ireland's first SDG National Implementation Plan and Voluntary

National Review, both published in 2018, placed limitations on the scope of stakeholder consultations (DCCAIE, 2018a). The Stakeholder Forum established currently lies outside the legislative process and its responsibilities are restricted to follow-up and review, public awareness raising and communicating policy (DCCAIE, 2018b).

The closest example to our HPC proposal is Ireland's Citizens' Assembly. Established in 2016, it has had some notable successes in the areas of abortion rights and climate action. The 99 members of the Assembly are citizens entitled to vote at a referendum, randomly selected so as to be broadly representative of Irish society. The political issue to be considered is assigned by the Oireachtas. Each meeting includes expert presentations, Q&A and debate, roundtable discussion and a plenary session. The Assembly thus injects expertise into citizens' deliberations on the particular policy issue. A final report with recommendations are then put before the Houses of the Oireachtas. The Assembly separates out fully its deliberations from the Oireachtas and does not mix them with feedback from legislators. As a result, the Oireachtas votes on policy recommendations which it was not involved in developing. Recommendations are delivered from a directly representative section of Irish society rather than through the party process.

The Oireachtas in the areas of abortion rights and climate action has set up an inter-party parliamentary committee to deal with what are considered hard political issues. They in turn can invite expert opinions into their deliberations and make recommendations for legislative change which formed the basis of repealing the eight amendment in the constitution and lead to legislation to allow abortion for the first time in Ireland. This structure is not unlike the UN HLPF. Where dialogue happened between stakeholders as a first step leading to a declaration to be formed by ministers of nations when under the UN Economic and Social Council and leaders when under the UN General Assembly.

Our framework for HPC wishes to formalize a non-governmental input into inter-party parliamentary committees. Citizens' Assembly allows whole of society to put forward recommendations for policy change to the parliament but the parliamentary committee's topic, membership and inputs are controlled by the members of the Oireachtas. This creates several potential problems for policy-making that are especially relevant to the SDGs. First, parliamentarians represent geographic constituencies and regardless of the specific voting procedure used, ultimately it is likely there will be social groups who are left behind in the electoral process and unrepresented in the legislative process. To protect the Leave No One Behind Principle and to help achieve an integrated approach to policy-making, it is important that the economic, social and environmental interests of "unelected" social groups are given representation in the legislative process. Second, short election cycles mean that committees consisting only of elected representatives are not conducive to the medium and long-term planning and policy-making that is required to achieve the SDGs. Third, inter-party committees are open to capture by vested interests. In particular, individuals or organizations with money, political economic power and connections can influence the work of legislators at any stage of the legislative process and block stakeholder inputs from the pre-legislative stage.

To overcome these problems, we suggest that stakeholders should be given a formal mandate in parliamentary committees. Specifically, we propose the establishment of hybrid parliamentary committees that are inter-party, inter-government and inter-Major Group and other stakeholders. HPC structures would give stakeholders an ex-ante formal role in SDG policy formation, implementation and review. All stakeholders could promote and protect their interest, without harming other interest groups. Stakeholders could promote an integrated approach to SDG policy and ensure minority groups are not left behind. Such a hybrid could help to deliver medium- to long-term planning that is independent of political cycles and vested interests. There is some precedence for the presence of stakeholders in committee work of houses of government. In the Irish Senate graduates of Universities elect six members and eleven members are nominated by the Taoiseach (Prime Minister). The later can be from all walks of life. Reform of the Senate could lead to Major Groups getting a formal presence in the upper house, such as Women's group representatives. Our HPC would allow checks and balances from Major groups of society as an input into legislation, the presence of Major groups of society in the upper house would allow checks and balances at the end of the legislative process.

Finally there is the question of whether our proposal actually results in better policy. There is, however, an interesting precedent for our proposal. Walsh and Whelan (2010) show how the top government official T.K. Whitaker's appointment of three academic economic advisors, including Professor Loudon Ryan, to the Capital Investment Advisory Committee in 1956 shifted Irish industrial policy away from three decades of protectionism and import substitution industrialization towards the export-oriented economic theories of Hirschman (1958). The committee was set up by the Department of Finance, and chaired by John Leyden, then secretary of the Department of Industry and Commerce and of Supplies. The advice from this committee was to become a cornerstone of Whitaker's industrial policy. In particular, Hirschman's theories were adopted for Ireland's vision of economic development via the writings and counsel of Professor Loudon Ryan. It has largely been credited with the development of an openness to trade that paved the way for the economic growth achieved in Ireland during the 1960s. Today industrial policy is overlooked by three organizations IDA Ireland, Forfas and Enterprise Ireland employing more than 1,200 people that still involve academics across various committees. While this example clearly illustrates how expert engagement of non-governmental stockholders contributed to economic development in Ireland. Walsh (2015) outlines how such investment supports could in principle be modified to incorporate the social and environmental dimensions of industrial policy.

Conclusion

Pisano et al. (2015) identified that governance for sustainable development requires long-term planning, integration of social, economic and environmental policies across different levels of governance, participation of stakeholder groups in the policy decision-making processes and the ability to reflect on existing and ongoing policies through continuous monitoring, evaluation, and re-adaptation. We argue that these requirements should be prescribed both at international levels like the UN HLPF as well as within each nation-state level. The UN HLPF currently follows all of them to a large extent though it may be argued that more urgency is required particularly to increase participation from stakeholders and encourage a whole-of-society approach to SDG implementation. To increase stakeholders'

participation both nationally and internationally, we propose the adoption of HPCs that have the potential to play an important role within nations and internationally. In other words, our structure follows an approach that conjointly feeds into national governance approaches but also to the UN HLPF and vice versa.

Focusing on the case of Ireland, it is clear from an analysis of its political institutions that there are entry points for stakeholders in the legislative process. While there is no legal obligation on government to involve stakeholders in policy-making, we have noted that some interesting examples of stakeholder engagement in policy formulation and implementation have occurred.

To enhance stakeholder engagement in national level SDG policy processes, we outline HPCs that are inter-party, inter-government and inter-Major Group and other Stakeholders. At the root of our argument is the view that such a committee structure is necessary to prevent the capture of parliamentarians by special interest groups. Ultimately, this will aid the delivery of medium and long-term planning that is essential for sustainability planning. Moreover, it will also assist with achieving an integrated and inclusive approach to SDG policy-making. By working together with parliamentarians and bureaucrats, stakeholders can help to craft inclusive and sustainable recommendations that succeed in passing both Houses. A formal mandate for Major Groups and other stakeholders in parliamentary committees should help to enhance the role of stakeholders in the SDGs and create greater society-wide accountability in the SDG process. It would also help to move Major Groups away from their role as watch dogs towards agenda setters and policy makers and induce greater ownership and easier implementation of the SDGs. Such a process would enable the development of policies that are evidence-based and assessed in an integrated way that supports the shift to open governance.

There are shortcomings associated with our proposal. First, there is the question of whether enhanced representation in the committee stage of the legislative process actually leads to better policy? Recommendations from the committee stage may still be blocked by voting in either of the Houses. However, as Ireland's experience with the Citizens' Assembly suggests, stakeholder approval could be used as a way for parliamentarians to legitimize the passing of bills that otherwise would be difficult to get through the House.

Second, HPCs raise interesting questions about the legitimacy of involving stakeholders in the legislative process. For example, civil society, the private sector and academia are not democratic organizations and they have in principle no accountability to citizens. In theory these constituencies can elect their representatives.

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