

# Multi-level Governance

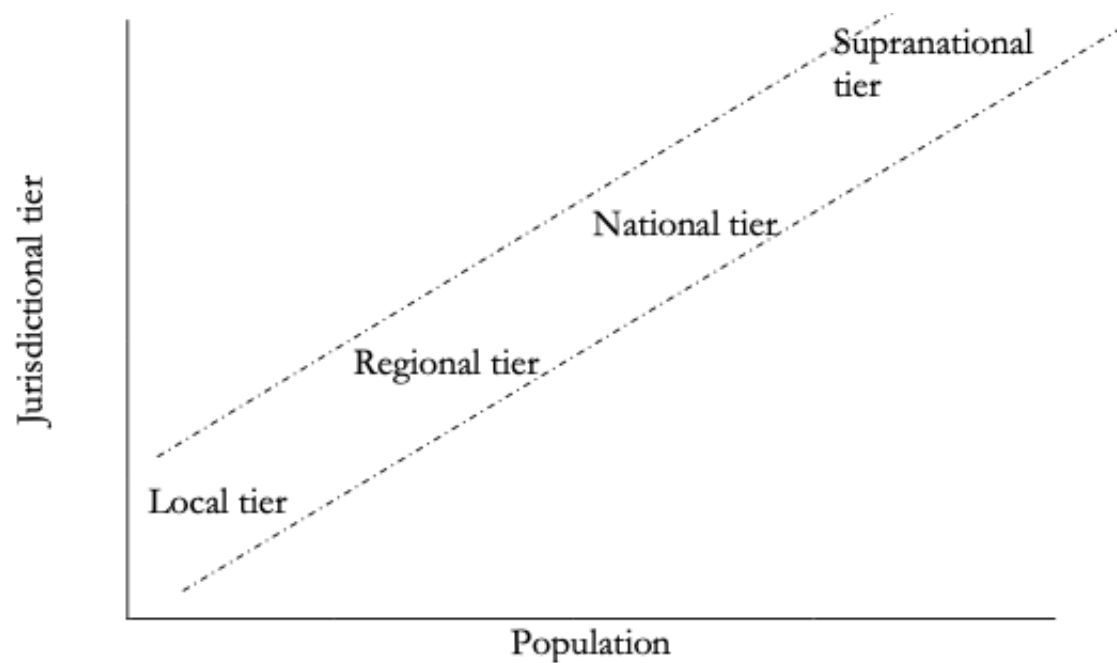
UNDESA CEPA Strategy Guidance Note

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# What is multi-level governance?

A system of governance in which responsibilities and decision-making authority are distributed among multiple levels of government.



# Benefits and risks of multi-level governance (MLG)

**The key benefit is scale flexibility:** MLG allows to adjust the level of governance to the territorial scale at which a policy is most efficiently provided.

- Some policies are better provided at the central level or even international level (economies of scale)
- Other goods benefit from a localized provision (e.g. when preferences vary sharply across regions within a country)
- MLG may help to preserve peace in multi-ethnic countries as it allows various linguistic and cultural groups some autonomy & protection from central authority

**The key risk is increased transaction costs** of coordinating multiple jurisdictions and the extra administrative overheads they generate.

Finding workable policy solutions can be further complicated by partisan or ideological differences between different levels

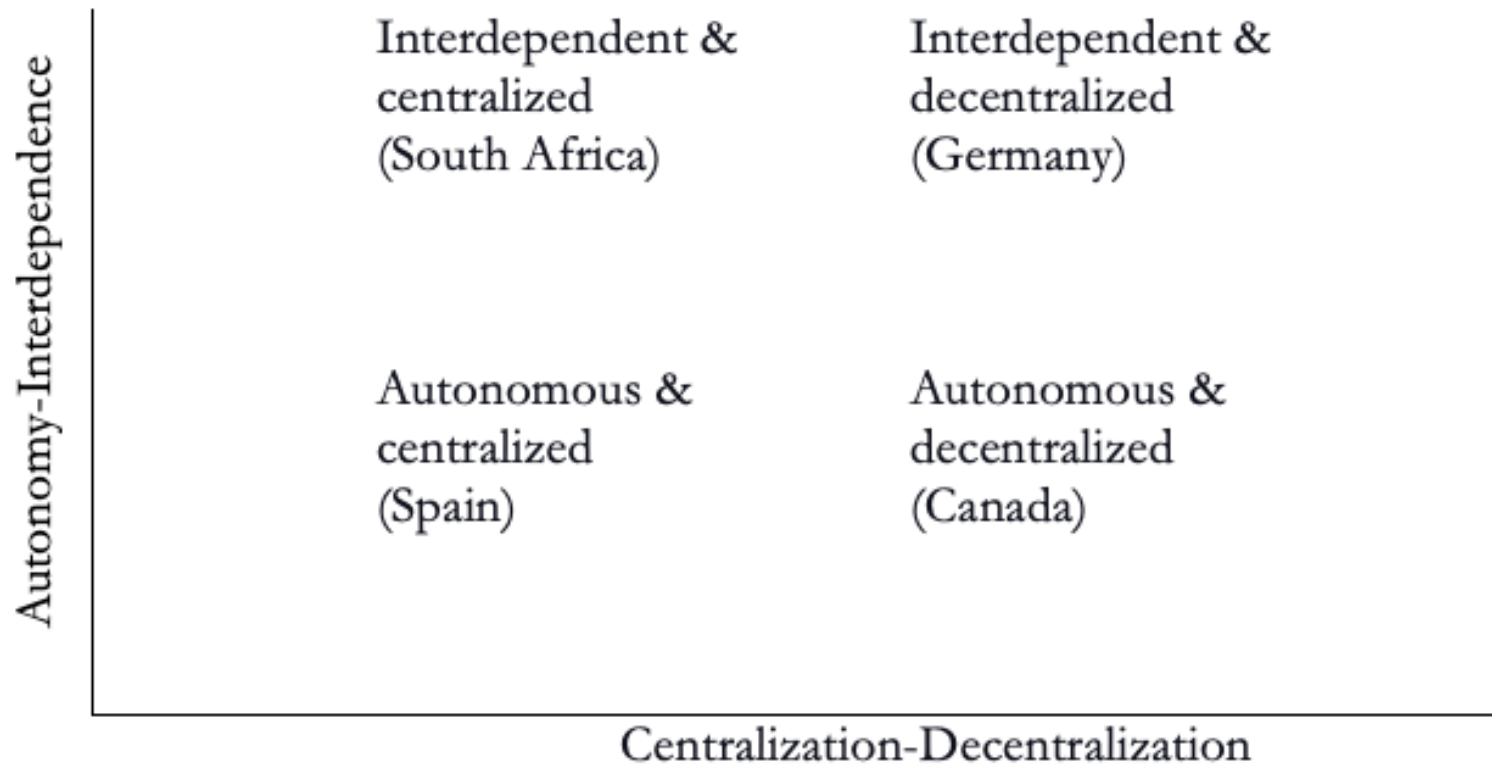
# Key properties of multi-level systems

There has been general trend towards multi-level governance, but there is significant cross-country variation in how have structured their multi-level systems

We broadly distinguish between two distinct properties of multi-level system:

- 1) Centralization – Decentralization:** Aspects related to the extent to which competencies and resources have been decentralized refer to the **location of authority** in a multi-level system.
- 2) Autonomy – Interdependence:** **The way in which different jurisdictional levels relate to one another.** Does the system provide levels with autonomous spheres of action or are levels highly interdependent?

# Consequences for Policymaking



# Implementation: Centralization - Decentralization

Assign functions to the appropriate territorial level, which may require reallocating competencies up or down the territorial scale through:

- New legislation to be passed
- Temporary contracts between levels of government
- Creation of task-specific jurisdictions with flexible territorial boundaries(e.g. transport authority)

Capacity building: Ensuring a level of government has the capacity to carry out new functions (fiscal resources, human resources, knowledge and experience)

# Implementation: Autonomy –Interdependence

- Setting up coordinating bodies can help manage interdependence.
- Coordinating bodies institutionalize repeated interaction between different levels of government and provide a forum for coordination and joint decision-making on conflictual matters.
- For instance, routinized executive-level meetings between regional and central government can help invite collaboration.
- Less high-profile coordinating bodies include working groups, task forces, or specific government agencies and offices.

Thank you for  
your attention