

Multi-level Governance

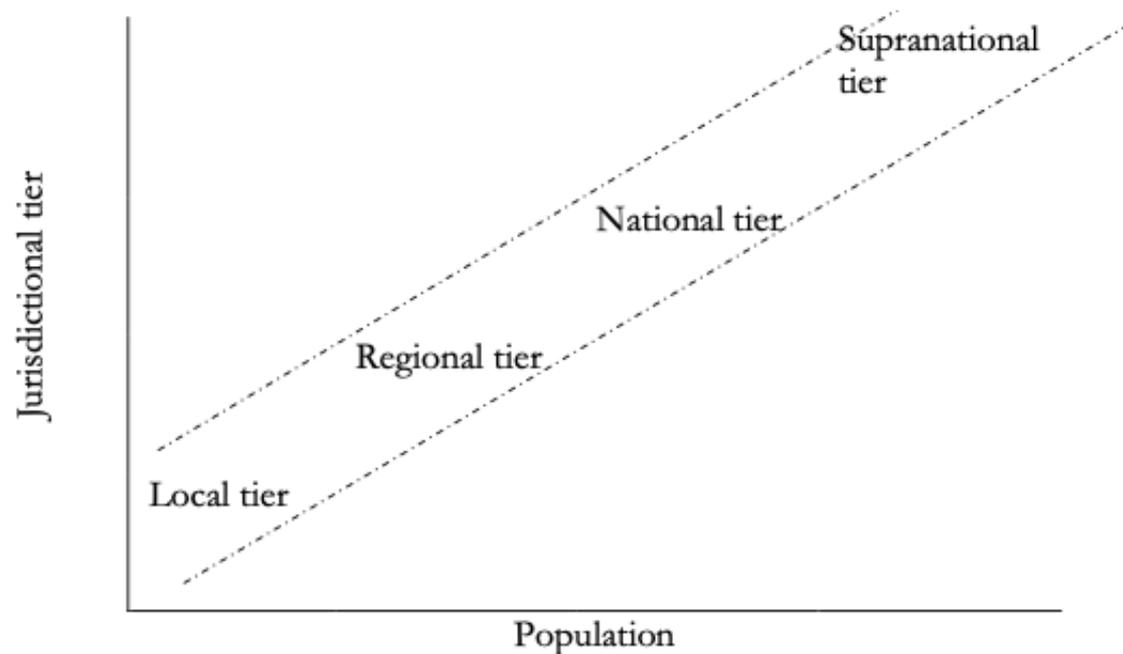
UNDESA CEPA Strategy Guidance Note

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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

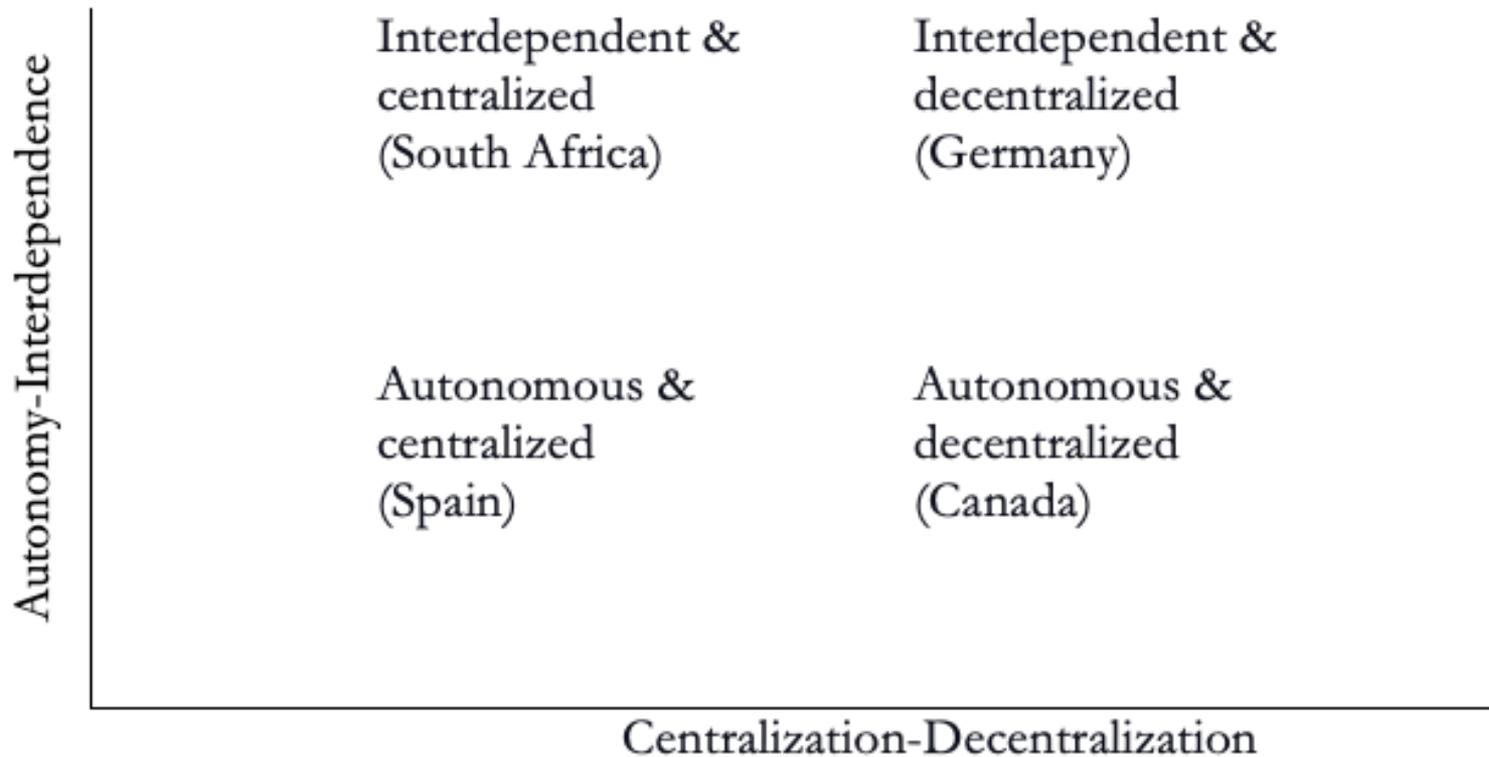
Key properties of multi-level systems

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