Effective governance for Sustainability: Beyond the polycrisis lies complexity

Introduction at the SF Webinar on SDGs 15 and 16
29 June 2023

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

louismeuleman@ps4sd.eu  29 June 2023  www.ps4sd.eu
• **Sound policy and effective governance** need each other

• **Policy** gives the direction but to get things done, “ultimately, it’s all about governance”
Mazzucato is right:
• The public sector has been neglected and undermined for decades and has lost much of its responsiveness and expertise
• Consultancies have hollowed out public administration and made governments dependent on them
• Governments have lost their collective intelligence and basic expertise \(\rightarrow\) recovery through peer learning!
• How to rely on Rule of Law if governments cannot make effective laws anymore...\(\rightarrow\) boost inhouse expertise
2. Public Administration & Governance remains invisible for politicians and public as long as its quality is not measured with SDG 16/17 indicators

Indicator 17.14.1 on Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development (PCSD) is a good example:

• PCSD is a proxy for effective governance for the SDGs.

• 8 dimensions, and a self-assessment tool (by UNEP), but 3 y after reaching TIER II level, it’s NOT being used.

• The self-assessment tool is unreliable, but can be trusted if a quality protocol is added; a concrete proposal will soon be published.

• Time is running out: at the global review of all SDG indicators (2024/25) this one is about to be abolished.
3. **The polycrisis drives out complexity governance because crisis management is short-term, needs legislative shortcuts and huge amounts of money, and can afford to ignore parliaments, stakeholders, and the best knowledge. In addition, it is addictive... This is a big risk for the SDGs**

- Crisis management is important in current times, but many crises are also ‘wicked’, complex problems with interest conflicts.
- Crisis management asks for a fast, top-down approach; complex problems require testing, trying, reflecting, which is a slower response.
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Prof Dr Louis Meuleman
- Vice chair United Nations Committee of Experts on Public Administration
- Vice chair Scientific Committee European Environment Agency
- Visiting professor Leuphana University
- Director, Public Strategy for Sustainable Development, Brussels

Thank you for your attention!

E: louismeuleman@ps4sd.eu