

DISCUSSION PAPER

A TALE OF MULTIPLE DISCONNECTS:

Why the 2030 Agenda does not (yet?)
contribute to moving German gender
equality struggles forward



No. 29, May 2019

HANNAH BIRKENKÖTTER, GABRIELE KÖHLER, ANKE STOCK

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SUMMARY

This study addresses the percolation and domestication of the United Nations “2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development – Transforming our World” in Germany with a view to understanding its impact on domestic gender equality policies. Concentrating on federal-level policymaking, the main finding of the study is that the 2030 Agenda and SDG 5 have, as of yet, not had a discernible impact on domestic gender equality struggles. This is surprising, since the 2030 Agenda offers a holistic conception of sustainability, and thus has the ‘value added’ advantage of merging and transcending the rather disjointed gender, social justice and ecological sustainability policy strands.

Based on 28 interviews with government officials, CSO representatives and researchers, the study observes multiple disconnects. There is a lack of cohesion and consistency across ministries and civil society actors, resulting in a horizontal disconnect. There is a vertical disconnect between the 2030 Agenda as a multilateral agreement and its domestication. Perhaps because the 2030 Agenda is a soft-law tool, it has limited clout for transformative change; it is moreover seen to be weaker on gender equality

commitments than other pertinent international agreements, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA) or EU-level legislation.

An obvious conclusion of the study is to strengthen institutional linkages. In government policymaking, links between gender and “green” issues need to illustrate the value added of SDG 5 and its 2030 Agenda context. In civil society, CSOs devoted to gender equality and actors primarily engaged in the ecological dimensions of sustainability would need to interface strategically. Interacting with political parties committed to promoting gender and sustainable development could be helpful. The study flags two immediate opportunities: a new German Sustainable Development Strategy to be developed by 2020, and Germany’s 2021 presentation to the UN’s High-level Political Forum (HLPF).

In sum, the vision of gender equality needs to resonate with all actors supporting sustainable development. This could support women’s struggles in addressing Germany’s structural gender disadvantages.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Die Saga vieler Dissonanzen:

Warum die Agenda 2030 (noch) nicht dazu beiträgt, die Gendergerechtigkeitsbewegung in Deutschland voranzubringen

Diese Studie befasst sich mit der Rezeption der Agenda für nachhaltige Entwicklung der Vereinten Nationen (2015), und insbesondere, inwieweit das nachhaltige Entwicklungsziel 5 zu Geschlechtergerechtigkeit Bundespolitik beeinflusst. Die Studie kommt zu dem Ergebnis, dass in Deutschland bislang kein erkennbarer Anstoß der Agenda auf die Frauen*bewegung und den Kampf um Gleichberechtigung zu verzeichnen ist. Das Ergebnis überrascht insofern, als der gesamtheitliche Anspruch der Agenda 2030 gerade dadurch einen "Mehrwert" bietet, dass sie herkömmlich eher nicht miteinander verknüpfte Politikbereiche - Geschlechter-, soziale, und Klimagerechtigkeit - zusammenführt und auf eine neue Ebene heben könnte.

Ausgehend von 28 Interviews mit Vertreterinnen und Vertretern aus Ministerien, Zivilgesellschaft und der Wissenschaft, verzeichnet die Studie verschiedene Dissonanzen. Es fehlt an Kohärenz auf ministerieller Ebene, sowie zwischen Regierung und Zivilgesellschaft – eine horizontale Kluft. Auch mangelt es an einer Verbindung zwischen der Agenda 2030, einer multilateralen Vereinbarung, und ihrer Umsetzung in nationale Sozial- oder Wirtschaftspolitik – eine vertikale Kluft.

Diese mag damit zusammenhängen, dass die Agenda nicht verbindlich ist; dadurch hat sie nur begrenzte Durchschlagskraft für wirklich transformative Prozesse. Außerdem gilt sie im Vergleich zur UN-Frauenrechtskonvention, der Pekinger Aktionsplattform, oder zu EU-Gesetzgebung als weniger progressiv.

Die Studie schließt mit einigen Anregungen: Es wäre wichtig, institutionelle Verknüpfungen auszubauen und zu verstärken. Bei Politikentscheidungen müsste der Mehrwert der Agenda 2030 und ihres Geschlechtergerechtigkeitsziels aufgrund ihrer Verschränkung mit „grünen“ Anliegen klarer erkennbar werden. In zivilgesellschaftlichen Zusammenhängen müssten NGOs aus der Genderpolitik und aus der ökologischen Bewegung strategisch zusammenarbeiten. Auch wäre anzuregen, sich stärker mit den politischen Parteien zusammenzusetzen, die sich für Genderfragen und Nachhaltigkeit engagieren. Die Studie weist auf zwei unmittelbar anstehende Prozesse hin, die Ansatzpunkte hierfür bieten könnten: die deutsche Nachhaltigkeitsstrategie wird bis 2020 überarbeitet, und Deutschlands nächster Beitrag zum Hochrangigen Politischen Forum der Vereinten Nationen steht 2021 an.

Kurzgefasst: eine Vision von Geschlechtergerechtigkeit müsste alle Akteure der Nachhaltigkeitspolitik inspirieren. Das könnte die Frauen*bewegung darin unterstützen, die strukturelle Benachteiligung von Frauen in Deutschland anzugehen.

1.

INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGICAL NOTE

This study addresses the percolation and domestication of the United Nations “2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development – Transforming our World” (UN GA 2015; in the following: 2030 Agenda) in Germany with a view to understanding its impact on domestic gender equality policies. More precisely, the question at hand is whether and how the 2030 Agenda contributes to moving domestic gender equality struggles forward. This question is pertinent: the 2030 Agenda was devised as a universally applicable agenda for the international community. In addition, Germany objectively continues to face a series of challenges in terms of gender equality. It is thus conceivable that Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 as a stand-alone goal on gender equality, as well as the many additional gender-sensitive indicators in the 2030 Agenda,¹ might give a new impetus to domestic gender equality struggles.

In terms of other multilateral processes on gender equality, Germany ratified the legally binding Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1985 and is formally committed to the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA). In terms of sustainability, Germany has been very active internationally in the Rio processes, is a Member State of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and has ratified the Paris Agreement. Moreover, as an active EU Member State, the country’s governance system has obligations to European instruments regarding sustainability, climate and gender objectives. The 2030 Agenda is then one of several processes that may, or may not, influence policy discourse in general, and gender equality in particular.

The main finding of this study is that the 2030 Agenda has, as of yet, no discernible impact on

domestic gender equality struggles.² What is more, ongoing debates in Germany – on issues such as work-life balance, women’s income poverty and unpaid care work, gender stereotypes, gender identity and LGBTI rights, the right to safe abortion, sexual harassment and violence against women, and the role of boys and men, or the rights of refugee and migrant women, to name a few topics currently on the feminist agenda in Germany – tend to make no reference to the 2030 Agenda and remain largely disconnected from the domestic sustainability discourse. Trying to explain this sobering insight is at the core of this study.

One possible explanation might be that the 2030 Agenda simply does not contain strong normative

¹ The 2030 Agenda contains a total of 54 gender-specific indicators (out of 232 indicators in total), cf. UN Women 2018: 49/50.

² There is an argument to be made – and it is made by the German Federal Government – that implementing the 2030 Agenda has implications on Germany’s development cooperation and foreign policy, insofar as Germany’s domestic action has an impact abroad, and as a major donor country. In fact, a part of the gender-related reporting by Germany under the Voluntary National Review focuses on Germany’s “responsibility abroad”. The focus of this study, however, is exclusively on domestic gender equality struggles.

commitments that would substantively advance gender equality struggles in Germany.³ We would like to dispel this line of thought up front and argue that the 2030 Agenda's gender equality commitments could have an added value for German domestic gender equality struggles on at least three levels:

Firstly, as is well-rehearsed, the 2030 Agenda features a revised conception of sustainability, joining up political, social, economic and ecological aspirations and commitments. Seeking to "leave no one behind" implies social and economic justice and human rights, and, as one commentator observed, in a country such as Germany has a particular relevance for gender equality, since women remain structurally disadvantaged. One possible, and arguably major, contribution of the 2030 Agenda would thus be to merge and transcend the currently rather disjointed gender, social justice and ecological sustainability policy strands and shift them from mere policy advice addressed to low-income countries to a commitment to transform German society and its basic tenets. Striving for transformation would imply (radical) structural change of the current system and the dominant economic order.⁴ This is perhaps not as obvious in high-income country settings as it is in low-income countries, but relates to structural disadvantages of women and girls, and of socially excluded groups, who need to exert more effort or spend more financial and other resources if sustainability in the ecological sense is to be met.⁵

³ Indeed, several interviewees remarked that there was a need to show the added value of the 2030 Agenda.

⁴ Razavi 2016; on the implications of the concept of transformation, UNRISD 2016; on the need for structural reforms in the global economy, Fukuda-Parr 2016.

⁵ In low-income, "developing" countries, low-income women and girls tend to be farmers of marginal lands and work in the informal or global value chains economy, and are traditionally in charge of assuring the functioning of and providing care to the household. They are structurally disadvantaged by climate change as it jeopardizes or destroys their access to land, energy and water resources. In a high-income country with developed water and energy infrastructures, the gendered structural disadvantage plays out over access to and safety in public spaces and public transport, and over access to goods and services that are environmentally sound but typically more costly. As an example: consuming products from fairtrade or ecological agriculture means shopping in different locations and at higher prices. This is a challenge in terms of time and money budgets and particularly difficult for working parents and low-income households.

Secondly, and more modestly, the 2030 Agenda and its holistic approach might provide a new impetus for mainstreaming gender issues into policy fields in which gender concerns do not currently play a major role – mainly environmental sustainability. While there are some intersections between the environmental and the women's movement in Germany, both trajectories are rather distinct, and remain disconnected. Opening up a new field for women's advocates would imply participation of the main actors from the gender equality policy field in sustainability policy processes.

Lastly, and least ambitiously, the 2030 Agenda or at least some of its targets might be used as additional normative support for issues that are currently on the feminist agenda – such as Target 5.2 for debates on violence against women and sexual harassment, or Target 5.4 on unpaid care work in the debates on work-life balance and gendered economic inequalities.

Despite the added value that the 2030 Agenda could bring to the German feminist movement, it has yet to gain traction among women's organizations. Our research suggests that the lack of discernible impact of the 2030 Agenda on domestic gender equality struggles stems from the multiple disconnects among policy entrepreneurs and between policy processes. Several of the main policy documents examined are delinked from each other, suggesting vertical and horizontal disconnects.

Institutionally, the domestication process of the 2030 Agenda is associated with two policy areas: on the one hand development cooperation, and on the other sustainability in the ecological sense.

Gender is reasonably well-mainstreamed as a concern in Germany's development policy. The 2030 Agenda informs the field of development cooperation and, as an agreed multilateral agenda, foreign policy at large. Considered as a follow-up to the Millennium Development Goals, many players perceive the 2030 Agenda's gender equality commitments as issues for development cooperation. Conversely, the notion of 'sustainability' is historically rooted in and somewhat narrowly conceived as environmental protection and climate change – policy areas which in turn are

seen as rather separate from the agenda of gender equality. There is a lack of cohesion and consistency across ministries and civil society actors engaged with sustainability in the narrow sense, or with gender policy, resulting in what can be termed a horizontal disconnect.

In addition, there is a vertical disconnect between the 2030 Agenda as a multilateral agreement and how it filters into domestic policy – its domestication. The main domestic instrument to implement the 2030 Agenda is the German Sustainable Development Strategy, which is explicitly modelled on the 2030 Agenda and its 17 SDGs. However, arguably because the UN Agenda is a soft-law tool, the German Strategy too has limited clout for transformative change domestically: it does not have the status of law. The 2030 Agenda is moreover seen to be weaker on gender equality commitments than other pertinent international policy agreements, notably CEDAW which is binding, and the Beijing Platform for Action, which is more detailed. In addition, gender equality as a policy field is not where UN agreements have traditionally exercised their biggest impact; instead, domestic contestation and struggle, and EU-level legislation are the formative factors.

While the political and policymaking landscape in Germany is organized as a three-tiered system – Federal Government, 16 states (*Länder*), and approximately 11,300 municipal governments, each with an executive and a legislative arm – the study concentrates on the federal level. State- and municipal-level processes are included selectively, to illustrate their role as conduits, but not examined systematically.

The study uses a mixed methods approach of institutional and document analysis and qualitative background interviews. We worked with an implicit understanding of “policy entrepreneurs” – individuals who in their respective institutions genuinely identify with, advocate for and push a particular agenda forward,⁶ and thereby constitute or create pressure groups for its realization.

6 On the role of policy entrepreneurs, see Hulme and Fukuda-Parr 2009.

We identified potential interview partners from an initial list of government and civil society actors with expertise either on gender, on the 2030 Agenda, or on environmental sustainability including climate change, to assess perceptions of the 2030 Agenda as a whole and its relevance to furthering the gender equality discourse in Germany. In a snowballing method, additional interviewees were then added to the original list, if they were frequently mentioned in preceding conversations, while others were omitted. In total, between June and September 2018, we interviewed 28 experts from ministries, civil society and think tanks, either in person or by phone, with some follow-up in January 2019 (see list, by institution and function, in Annex). In parallel, we had numerous impromptu conversations on the sidelines of various conferences and seminar events. The interview format was conversational, with the structure of questions adapted for each interview in an iterative process, with a view to filling gaps and understanding mechanics and political processes, rather than undertaking uniform semi-structured interviews. Many of the interviewees were reluctant to speak; some had to check back for authorization from their supervisors, and many requested anonymity. Verbatim quotes and references have been authorized. The merit of these semi-informal discussions is that their confidentiality permitted insights which cannot be gleaned from official documents or public statements.

An additional reflection on methodology is that despite a systematic approach, it needs to be noted that policy research in one’s own country is not immune to the bias of tacit knowledge and of the networks with which each of the researchers is affiliated. Ideally, this can enable an inside understanding/analysis of the formal processes as well as overt and hidden political and power dynamics; nevertheless, the authors would like to flag a certain degree of subjectivity as a methodological risk.

Moreover, there is the challenge of the limited time frame and volume of this study, which circumscribed its scope. Causal inferences can only be made with caution. Rather, it seemed plausible to

build hypotheses based on the observations made throughout the study. In order to establish firm causal links, additional empirical research would be needed.

Section 2 maps the policy fields relevant to the domestic implementation of the 2030 Agenda and maps those actors who have a role to play in integrating the 2030 Agenda's gender equality commitments

into German domestic policy. It also establishes that multiple disconnects exist among actors and between key policy documents. In section 3, we analyse various factors that could account for the observed disconnects and find that one major obstacle is the lack of substantive and institutional interfaces. We conclude with some cautious optimism in section 4 that, provided all actors make a conscious effort, these disconnects could be overcome in the future.

2.

DOMESTICATING THE 2030 AGENDA'S GENDER COMMITMENTS: MAPPING THE FIELD(S)

The 2030 Agenda's gender equality commitments "landed" in a policy setting of two relatively distinct policy fields: that on gender and the struggle for gender justice, and the ecological/green/climate-change movement. In Germany, sustainability has long been viewed through the lens of environmental protection, a movement with only limited overlaps to the older feminist movement. In this section, we provide cursory overviews of both policy fields and its main actors, and establish that the two fields do not currently intersect beyond insular points.

Two preliminary notes on the mapping of actors are in order. First, actors, or policy entrepreneurs, are sorted into "government and legislative" on the one hand, and "civil society" and think tanks on the other hand to provide a clear layout, but this distinction is far from airtight. Both gender equality and environmental sustainability are institutionalized policy fields with public sector actors today, but are historically rooted in broad civil society movements. Second, and relatedly, "civil society" is not a uniform term. Environmental sustainability in particular is close to and relying on the expertise of independent research and policy advisory bodies, which are rather distinct from citizen-based civil society – "civil society proper". This latter group, in turn, again has many strands: from grass-roots, locally-based initiatives through mandate-oriented NGOs – some of which act as advocacy institutions, whereas others are more service-oriented – to umbrella organizations operating at the federal level. In addition, the study notes the role of two national representations of the UN system: UN Women National Committee Germany and the German United Nations Association.

2.1

Gender equality struggles in Germany: trajectories and actors

2.1.1 Historical background

The women's movement in Germany builds on a long history. As a result of struggles during World War I, women's and labour movements achieved women's universal suffrage in 1918.⁷ Following World War II, the women's movements in the Former West and East Germanies followed different trajectories. In West Germany, the 1949 Basic Law contained a formal commitment to gender equality, but social (and often-times legal) realities did not change until the late 1960s/1970s, when various factions of the women's movement started fighting for various causes: equal political representation in political parties, public

⁷ Karin Nordmeyer, Chairwoman of UN Women National Committee Germany, pointed out that this centenary could offer an opportunity for gender advocacy, but did not seem to have much traction. Interview, 12 June 2018.

administration, business and academia; health and sexual and reproductive rights such as the right to safe abortion⁸; economic equality around equal pay and work life – family life balance; and against violence against women (*Frauenhäuserbewegung*). A strong alliance of women and peace developed around the movement for nuclear disarmament (*Frauenfriedensbewegung*); another important alliance was forged around the decriminalization of homosexuality.⁹ In the German Democratic Republic (former East Germany, GDR), the political scenario was a different one: the State formally supported women in the workplace and provided childcare as well as economic incentives, maternity leave and other provisions supporting pregnant women/mothers.¹⁰ While this did not change preconceived notions about motherhood and childcare being a primarily female task,¹¹ it meant that in the GDR the battle for civil and political rights tended to be more prominent than the struggle for economic and social rights.

When the two countries were unified ('united') in 1989/1990, a common Constitution was needed; after much contestation, the pre-existing FRG Constitution was adapted.¹² As a result of major pressure from civil society and women's movements,¹³ in 1994, Art. 3 (2)

German Basic Law (the German Constitution) was amended, stating that "The State shall promote the actual implementation of equal rights for women and men and take steps to eliminate disadvantages that now exist." At the legal level, this resulted in a debate on the legality of measures that proactively advantaged women (affirmative action), especially with regard to quotas for leadership positions or more generally for positions where women are underrepresented, which were seen by some as a form of "reverse discrimination".¹⁴

In parallel to and reinforcing the country-level gender struggles, EU law has been used by gender advocates as a main driver for progress on gender equality in Germany, in particular with regard to equal treatment in employment. EU law is binding for its Member States, and it takes precedence over domestic law.¹⁵ The general principle of non-discrimination has been central both for establishing the common market as early as in the seventies,¹⁶ but also beyond, extending to banning sex discrimination.¹⁷ Gender equality became an integral part of EU law with the Treaty of Amsterdam (1997), and thus also part of German domestic law. The German General Equal Treatment Act (*Allgemeines Gleichbehandlungsgesetz*) of 2006 implements four EU Directives: the Race Equality Directive, the Employment Equality Directive, the Gender Equality Directive for Goods and Services and the Employment Gender Equality Directive.¹⁸ Today, a comprehensive non-discrimination rule is enshrined in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights (2000). Those high ambitions of the early century for gender

8 See the two judgments by the German constitutional court on termination of pregnancy of 25 February 1975 and 28 May 1993, BVerfGE 39, 1 and BVerfGE 88, 203. Under German law, abortion is a criminal offense but is not punished if the pregnant woman accepts counselling prior to the abortion procedure and within the first trimester, cf. also *infra*.

9 Male homosexuality was depenalized in the late 1950s in the GDR and the 1970s in the FRG, but it took until the early 1990s for it to be entirely decriminalized. Karsch 2016, pp. 134.

10 In the economic sphere, both Germanies shared a productivity – as opposed to a rights-based – orientation to gender equality. In the GDR 'model', an authoritarian productivist regime, women's employment was mandatory, as was the crèche for very young children; the labour force participation rate, at 91 per cent in 1989, was the highest in the world. Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugendliche [Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth] 2015, p. 21. In the FRG, LFPRs were high in the post-War period and decreased to 55 per cent in the late 1980s.

11 Karsch 2016, pp. 86-92.

12 An alternative approach would have been for representatives of both Germanies to jointly conceptualize a new Constitution, as the Basic Law had foreseen in its former Art. 146.

13 Limbach and Eckertz-Höfer 1993.

14 Baer and Markard 2018.

15 Case 26/62, Van Gend & Loos. 1963 E.C.R. 2 and Case 6/64, Flaminio Costa v. ENEL. 1964 E.C.R. 585. The German Constitutional Court recognizes the primacy of EU law, with the exception of basic constitutional structures and principles (*Staatsstrukturprinzipien*) which are constitutionally protected in Germany, cf. the judgment by the German Constitutional Court, BVerfGE 123, 267, at 343.

16 Craig/De Búrca, EU Law (2015) at pp. 609, 647–658, 668–674, 758–760.

17 Case 43/75, Defrenne v. Sabena, 1976 E.C.R. 455.

18 Council Directive 2000/43/EC of 29 June 2000; Council Directive 2000/78/EC of 27 November 2000; Council Directive 2004/113/EC of 13 December 2004; Directive 2002/73/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 September 2002 amending Council Directive 76/207/EEC.

equality at the EU level are not reflected as unequivocally in the more recent EC Europe 2020 Strategy (2010–2020), insofar as it mentions “gender equality” only three times: as a core value of the EU, as a means for increasing labour force participation and as a need for national implementation. Nevertheless, gender equality remains topical in these EU documents.

2.1.2 Persistent cleavages and current struggles

Despite the strong legal framework, including the constitutional commitment not only to formal equality, but to foster actual implementation of gender equality and the EU-wide anti-discrimination law, structural and intersecting inequalities persist. Some are the same as addressed by the 2030 Agenda – unpaid care work, the gendered pay gap, violence against women, discrimination of vulnerable groups.

The inequities are perhaps most egregious regarding economic inequality: the Gender Pay Gap is 21 per cent unadjusted (adjusted: 6 per cent), with significant differences between Eastern and Western Länder, and at overall lower-income levels in the Eastern Länder (former GDR).¹⁹ The Gender Lifetime Earnings Gap stands at 49 per cent, and the Gender Pension Gap at 53 per cent. This means that in particular female single parents and older and retired women face income poverty. In terms of workload, the averaged Gender Time Gap is 21 per cent. Social class and status play an exacerbating role: the Gender Care Gap ranges from 35 to 154 per cent, depending on household type (income/employment status; single parenthood).²⁰

Women’s representation in politics and the private sector, also addressed in SDG 5.5, is an evergreen of the feminist debate in Germany and the discussion has typically revolved around the question of legally enforceable quotas to increase female visibility in

public and private sector leadership positions.²¹ Over the past decade, this debate has been increasingly linked to a broader discussion on work-life balance and unpaid care work.²² There is a realization that sufficient income, economic equality and independence/autonomy are premised on full-time formal sector employment, which is juxtaposed with systemic challenges in the organization of the care economy. The 2013–2017 Federal Government has in recent years adopted a series of measures to redress the gender gaps and improve family care (e.g. minimum wage and wage transparency; quota reservations; various paid family leave provisions; entitlement to nursery/crèche space; improving leave and return rights for family-based child or elderly care, including pension scheme benefits for family leave periods). In the 2017 federal election and 2017/18 coalition negotiations, improving such policies and policy measures became a major campaign issue.²³

While especially paid parental leave provisions are gender-neutral at face value, they are *de facto* claimed by women more often than men, which in part accounts for the aforementioned outcomes in terms of economic inequalities and women’s poverty. This has led to an increasing debate on gender stereotypes in household labour distribution, a debate that has also been furthered by increasingly common patchwork families due to higher divorce rates, and rainbow families, due to the legalization of and increase in gay marriage and adoption rights. “Family” is no longer a

¹⁹ The unadjusted Gender Pay Gap is highest in Baden Württemberg (former FRG) at 26 per cent, whereas Mecklenburg Vorpommern (former GDR) only has a pay gap of 4 per cent, but overall much lower wage and salary levels than Baden Württemberg. Die Bundesregierung [The Federal Government] 2016a.

²⁰ Expert Commission on the Second Gender Equality Report 2017, pp. 7–9.

²¹ Quotas and political representation of women received a new spotlight due to the low representation of women in the German Bundestag after the 2017 federal elections: the lowest since 1998. In the context of plans to change the electoral law, there are proposals to add a gender quota for the parliamentary elections. Schäfer 2018. In January 2019, the Land of Brandenburg adopted the first-ever law aiming at gender parity in the state parliament, which caused a debate on the constitutionality of such a law.

²² Wichterich 2018. New approaches to employment and care work were also at the core of the Second Gender Equality Report of the Federal Government, in 2017. On the challenges of work-life balance in high-income countries such as Switzerland, Japan or Korea, see Razavi and Staab (Eds.) 2012.

²³ The topics addressed throughout the electoral campaign and beyond included crèche and kindergarten coverage; extending the school day/after-school care; further improving benefits for care work (*Lohnersatzleistungen*); and supporting volunteerism (*Ehrenamt*).

fixed concept consisting of a heterosexual, monogamous couple with children. There is an overall increase of fluidity of the gender concept that can be gleaned from recent debates.²⁴

Another topic that has received public attention (again) in recent years has been the issue of sexual harassment and sexual violence – another issue that is also taken up by the 2030 Agenda in its target 5.2. Sexual violence is a long-standing issue on the feminist agenda: while the first shelter for victims of domestic violence (*Frauenhaus*) opened in 1976, it was not until 1997 that marital rape was made a criminal offense. And it was only in 2016 and after much public campaigning that the German criminal code was reformed to accommodate the principle of “no means no” – until 2016, sexual violence was only criminally punishable if the victim had shown physical resistance to the sexual act. The UN Women National Committee Germany supported the “no means no” campaign.²⁵ Sexual harassment in Germany first became a prominent topic of debate on social media in 2013, when women tweeted their experiences of everyday sexual harassment in professional life under the hashtag #aufschrei (“outcry” or “crying out”).²⁶ The subsequent international #MeToo movement was equally present in German media and feminist circles.

In terms of sexual and reproductive rights and health, addressed in SDG 5.4, abortion is still technically a criminal offense under German law, even if it is not penalized within the first 12 weeks if a medical doctor carries out the abortion and if it is preceded by a medical consultation. In addition, it is a criminal offense to advertise abortion services if done for

personal profit or in a “grossly offensive” manner.²⁷ In 2017, a medical doctor who announced on her professional website that she was providing the medical consultation required for a non-punishable abortion was imposed a fine under this provision, which gave rise to an ongoing debate on the necessity of reforming the criminal code as it relates to abortion.²⁸

There is also an increasing debate about the fact that the “traditional” women’s movement in Germany has been largely dominated by white, cis-gender, high-income and well-educated women and thus does not represent the full spectrum of gendered experience in Germany.²⁹ There is a heightened awareness of intersectional discrimination and the specific situation of migrant and refugee women who often face different challenges with regard to identity politics, gender roles, and violence. One important symbol has been the hijab: there has been a debate on whether public employees – e.g. teachers, but also judges and public prosecutors – should be banned from wearing the hijab. One vocal pioneer of the German feminist movement has publicly advocated against the hijab in public life,³⁰ whereas several affected persons have adamantly argued that wearing the hijab is not incompatible with feminist positions and constitutional values.³¹

Another divide results from the divergent entitlements of women retirees in the Eastern and Western states of Germany respectively. Former GDR citizens, especially if they had divorced, draw far lower pensions than women in the former FRG, even after longer

24 Another facet that received high publicity was the acknowledgment of the Federal Constitutional Court of a ‘third option’ for intersex people, putting a spotlight on the binary gender notion that is still prevalent. See the judgment by the German Constitutional Court of 10 October 2017, BVerfGE 147, 1.

25 UN Women Nationales Komitee Deutschland e.V. [UN Women National Committee Germany] 2016.

26 The hashtag was subsequently awarded one of Germany’s most prestigious social media/online awards, the Grimme Online Award. Its initiator, Anne Wiczorek, is today a vocal feminist in German public life and was a member of the expert committee that authored the advisory opinion as part of the Second Federal Report on Gender Equality. See *infra*.

27 Cf. §§ 218, 218a-c, 219 and 219a of the German Criminal Code.

28 See the debate in the German Parliament: Deutscher Bundestag [German Parliament] 2018. The Ministry of Justice presented a draft law to amend § 219a of the Penal Code which would allow doctors to inform that they perform abortions. However, the draft law does not allow doctors performing abortions to provide any further information on the procedure on their websites. Only a reference to an official site would be allowed. This draft law has been heavily criticized by parts of the feminist movement, e.g. the German Female Lawyers’ Association (Deutscher Juristinnenbund): <https://www.djb.de/verein/Kom-u-AS/ASRep/st19-03/>. The modified provision of the Criminal Code entered into force in March 2019, BGBl. 2019 Part I Nr. 9, p. 350.

29 See Karsch 2016, pp. 122, 226.

30 Schwarzer 2015.

31 Gümüşay 2011; Ramadan 2016; Sandhu 2017.

years of employment. This has created a distinct women's movement around that particular concern in the Eastern Länder.³²

Despite many achievements in terms of formal equality, a lot of “unfinished business” remains, as is visible from this cursory and certainly incomplete overview on salient issues on the contemporary feminist agenda in Germany. What is clear, though, is that the women's movement is not unified around one single topic or issue area. Rather, these many strands of contestation indicate that alliances are diluted and stratified, and that there is not one single “women's movement” in Germany.

2.1.3 The German gender equality architecture

This section maps several main actors from the gender equality policy field, with a view to identifying those actors who ought to be seen as natural allies in transforming the gender equality commitments from the 2030 Agenda. While it is divided into “government and legislative” as well as “civil society”, as mentioned, actors are not always strictly separated, but instead placed on a continuum.

Government and legislative

Women's rights and gender equality became institutionalized in the FRG in 1986, when the then Ministry for Youth, Family and Health was explicitly mandated to also address women's issues. Currently, the Ministry is officially responsible for families, senior citizens, women and youth and it is the prime institution and main focal point for executing federal level gender equality policy.³³ This is also true with regard to international gender equality policy: While the overall responsibility for international (non-EU) affairs lies generally with the Foreign Office, the Family Ministry has the lead both for the national reporting procedure on CEDAW as well as for the follow-up process to the Fourth World Conference on Women and the Beijing Platform for Action, in particular the annual

Commission on the Status of Women.³⁴ International efforts to support women globally are primarily housed in other ministries, however, the Foreign Office is responsible for implementation of UN Security Council resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, through National Action Plans in place since 2013. The Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development is responsible for fostering gender equality in development cooperation, guided by a multi-annual Gender Action Plan and annual road maps.³⁵ The Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development explicitly understands the Gender Action Plan as a contribution to implementing the 2030 Agenda.³⁶ While these instruments, which are tailored specifically to foreign and development policy, are not the focus of this study, it is worthwhile mentioning them nonetheless to provide a comprehensive picture.

Gender mainstreaming is in theory mandatory for all ministries since 2000.³⁷ In addition, all public offices with more than 100 employees have a so-called ‘gender equality official’ (*Gleichstellungsbeauftragte*), who acts as a focal point for gender equality issues and is charged with fostering gender justice within the respective institution.³⁸ The current German Parliament has a Parliamentary Committee (*Ausschuss*) on Families, Seniors, Women and Youth with a subcommittee on children (*Kinderkommission*).³⁹ Most parties represented in the German Parliament have spokespersons for women's issues and often gender working groups. The Second Federal Gender Equality Report, arguably the most important policy document

32 See Köpping 2018, pp. 47-66.

33 <https://www.bmfsfj.de>

34 Note, however, that different desks are responsible within the Family Ministry for CEDAW and CSW, respectively.

35 Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development 2009. First Gender Action Plan (2009-2012); Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development 2016. Second (2016-2020) Gender Action Plan; German Federal Foreign Office 2013 and 2017. First (2013-2016) and Second (2017-2020) National Action Plan for the Implementation of UN Security Council resolution 1325.

36 Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung [Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development] 2016.

37 §2 of the Common Rules of Procedure for Federal Ministries [Gemeinsame Geschäftsordnung der Bundesministerien].

38 On the basis of the Federal Equality Act (*Bundesgleichstellungsgesetz*). The Federal Equality Act is also applicable to social institutions and the private sector; all federal states have state equality acts applicable to local authorities.

39 Deutscher Bundestag [German Parliament] 2018.

for gender equality policy at the federal level and examined in more detail below, was commissioned by the Parliament.

Civil society

There is a broad landscape of civil society actors who are active in the field of gender equality, at the federal, regional and local levels. As we have tried to show, the current feminist debate in Germany is rich as well as fragmented, making it impossible to provide a comprehensive picture of all active civil society actors within the limits of this study. Instead, we highlight two organizations that are situated at the interface of federal-level advocacy and international policy processes and are thus ideally positioned for advancing the 2030 Agenda's gender dimension domestically: the German Women's Council and the UN Women National Committee Germany.

One of the oldest and most influential women's organizations in Germany is the German Women's Council (*Deutscher Frauenrat*), an umbrella organization uniting 60 organizations.⁴⁰ Its membership is very diverse, comprising organizations providing services to women,⁴¹ as well as advocacy organizations, often umbrella organizations themselves.⁴² The women's groups of three political parties (the Christian-Democratic Union, the Social Democratic Party and the Green Party) are members of the Women's Council, as is the women's group of the umbrella labour union association (*Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund*), in addition to numerous professional associations and faith-based (Catholic, Protestant, Jewish and Muslim) women's associations.

The German Women's Council is an association under German law (*eingetragener Verein*) with a statute, an annual membership assembly, an elected board and 10 salaried staff. As a well-established umbrella organization, the German Women's Council has been the traditional focal point for women's civil society organizations for political advocacy.

The German Women's Council works closely with the UN Women National Committee Germany with regard to participation in UN-level policy processes, most importantly the Commission on the Status of Women. The UN Women National Committee Germany was first established in 1991 as the National Committee to support UNIFEM and was transformed into a national committee of UN Women in 2011. Its mandate is to connect "country-level work on equality and equity with the international work of UN Women on gender equality and the advancement of women".⁴³ The UN Women National Committee works primarily on gender issues, and has been convening sessions on the gender aspects of the 2030 Agenda, such as the launch of the UN Women flagship report in February 2018.⁴⁴ The event focused mainly on the international dimensions of gender and development, but challenges in Germany were also briefly addressed.⁴⁵ UN Women National Committee Germany faces the challenge of bridging the gap between its fundraising remit, its commitment to influence domestic gender equality and women's empowerment policy, and to feed domestic gender equality concerns into the international/UN agenda.⁴⁶

40 Its roots in post-war West Germany date back to 1951 and it understands itself to be in the tradition of the women's rights movement dating back to Wilhelminian times. Deutscher Frauenrat [National Council of German Women's Organizations].

41 E.g. the information centre of independent shelters for women suffering from domestic violence (*Zentrale Informationsstelle Autonomer Frauenhäuser*). Note that women*/Frauen is used by some CSOs to raise awareness that not every person subscribes to a binary gender norm and that their services cater to all persons.

42 E.g. the federal association of migrant women or the federal association of people with physical and multiple disabilities.

43 UN Women Nationales Komitee Deutschland e.V. [UN Women National Committee Germany].

44 Deutsche Gesellschaft für die Vereinten Nationen e.V. [United Nations Association of Germany] 2018.

45 Interview with Bettina Metz, 19 September 2018.

46 Interviews with Karin Nordmeyer und Bettina Metz, 12 June and 19 September 2018.

2.2

Sustainability as part of environmental protection: subtle shifts in a policy field in Germany

In contrast to the women's movement, the environmental protection/ecological movement only moved to the fore in Germany in the 1970s and was internationalized starting in the late 1980s. The policy field of environmental protection is crucial to understanding the domestication of the 2030 Agenda: in Germany, sustainability has long been understood as environmental sustainability and traditionally, the Ministry for the Environment had the lead with regard to sustainability in the ecological sense.

2.2.1 Historical background

Sustainability – *Nachhaltigkeit* – originally referred to replacing whatever resources are extracted from nature, an approach developed by forestry scientists in Germany in the 18th century,⁴⁷ and picked up globally as a notion and a vision in *Our Common Future*, the report of the Brundtland Commission in 1987 (“Humanity has the ability to make development sustainable to ensure that it meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”).⁴⁸ It was framed as an ecological and as a development concept.

In the FRG, the social-democratic government led by Willy Brandt adopted a first environmental protection programme in 1971. Environmental politics in Germany early on adopted the precautionary principle as one major policy line, influenced by scientific research (more so than other policy fields).⁴⁹ After the oil crisis in 1973/74, the concern for the environment became a major element of political struggle linked to the students' movement and the 'New Social Movement'. As a civil society movement, it spanned environmental (concerned mainly with the death of

forests – *Waldsterben*), anti-nuclear, peace, as well as student and women's activists. In the late 1970s, the Green Party (later *Bündnis 90/Die Grünen*) emerged from these movements. Eva Quistorp, a contemporary witness and activist, suggested that it was the diversity of activists which accomplished the intersection of environmental sustainability and gender equality at the time.⁵⁰ She highlighted in particular the important role of the movement of 'Women for Peace' (*Frauen für den Frieden*) who were active in both Germanies, linking ecology and feminism at an early stage and spanning the bridge between East and West, thus bringing them to the political agenda of the Greens.

The Ministry for the Environment was created in 1986, following the nuclear accident in Chernobyl, and in 1987, Klaus Töpfer, formerly a member of the Scientific German Environment Agency (*Umweltbundesamt*, see also below), was appointed Minister for the Environment.⁵¹ During his tenure, German environmental politics were internationalized, and a strong focus put on international climate protection. Ever since, Germany has portrayed itself as a vanguard of environmental sustainability and climate protection.⁵² However, sustainability tends to primarily retain an ecological, rather than a broader socioeconomic and political, connotation; this is arguably the case in public discourse and the media, even if several of our interview partners affirmed that the 2030 Agenda demonstrated a broader understanding of the term “sustainability” that needed to be translated into domestic politics.⁵³

47 Von Carlowitz 1713.

48 World Commission on Environment and Development 1987, para. 27.

49 Hünemörder 2004, pp. 27-28.

50 Interview 6 July 2018.

51 Klaus Töpfer subsequently served as the Executive Director of the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) from 1998 through 2006.

52 For instance, Germany hosts the UNFCCC Secretariat and other environment-related treaty Secretariats.

53 Anonymous interviews, 4 June and 28 June 2018.

2.2.2 Lack of progress and current struggles

As part of its positioning as a climate-protection avant-garde, Germany has been an active player in the Rio process on sustainable development and in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and its Conference of the Parties (COP) processes.⁵⁴ But despite its international engagement, the sustainability concept as spelled out by the Agenda 21 took almost a decade to gain traction in German domestic environmental politics.⁵⁵

Today, Germany is behind schedule and off track with respect to most climate and sustainable (in the ecological sense) development commitments made both to the EU and the UNFCCC. This includes the reduction in CO₂ emissions⁵⁶, sustaining biodiversity, the share of renewables in energy sources, land use indicators and NO₂ emissions.⁵⁷ In each of these areas, Germany is falling behind commitments made for 2020, and has postponed delivery for most CO₂/NO₂ targets to 2030.⁵⁸ Another ecological backlash is the current German diesel fuel scandal (*‘Dieselskandal’*): Journalists revealed in 2015 that the exhaust diesel emissions of cars produced by Volkswagen in the US were manipulated. The allegedly ‘clean’ diesel technology mainly used by German car producers fell into disrepute,⁵⁹ and awareness rose that levels of NO₂ emissions in many German cities exceed EU ceilings.⁶⁰

Current controversial topics on the environmental protection/ecological agenda are numerous, ranging from the energy transition to the loss of biodiversity and climate change, all of which have high priority both in public and policy discourse. Energy transition from coal and nuclear to renewable energies in particular is a controversial topic with contradicting commercial and political interests and public concern. On the one hand, major energy companies reap high profits from traditional energy sources and therefore often oppose their decommissioning. On the other hand, ‘green technologies’ feature increasingly in German exports – as they become more profitable, political interest in their promotion rises. At the same time, the decommissioning of nuclear power plants and a plan to reduce the use of coal are supported by ecological civil society movements.⁶¹

2.2.3 Frail policy links between environmental sustainability, climate change and gender equality

While gender justice is certainly not a major concern on the environmental protection agenda and in the ecological movements in Germany, there are some fragile links between the two policy fields. The first

54 United Nations Climate Change.

55 Böcher and Töller 2012, pp. 33.

56 CO₂ emissions: compared to 1990 32 per cent reduction of emissions (2020 target = 40 per cent).

57 NO₂ emissions 2016 compared to 1990: 42 per cent reduction and stable 1 per cent decrease in the past four years (2020 target = 39 per cent).

58 See Umweltbundesamt [German Environment Agency] 2017 and its sector reports. Umweltbundesamt 2018b; Umweltbundesamt 2018a.; see peer review questionnaire answers in Rat für Nachhaltige Entwicklung [German Council for Sustainable Development] 2017.

59 When authorities found out that cars sold in Germany were manipulated as well, German courts imposed a fine of 1 billion euros on Volkswagen in June 2018, whereas fines in the U.S. for VW added up to 25 billion euros. Other companies too had used manipulated technology in order to produce false data on emissions. Breiting 2018. At the time of writing, litigation in front of German courts was still ongoing, with no clear outcome yet discernible.

60 Umweltbundesamt [German Environment Agency] 2017.

61 A recent example of ecological commitments versus commercial interests is the clearing of the Hambach forest in North-Rhine Westphalia which unfolded in the fall of 2018. It pits sustainability against commercial interests: RWE, a major German energy company, had mining permits and, from a formal legal perspective, was believed to be entitled to clear the forest for lignite mining. Environmental activists opposed the clearing of one of the oldest and best-preserved forests in the country. They had ‘occupied’ sections of the forest, living in treehouses. They refused to leave and at the time of writing were being forcibly evicted by the police. When a blogger documenting the eviction died in an accident, clearing was halted intermittently, but later resumed. Selle 2018. RWE was subsequently prohibited from clearing the forest by a court decision. As of May 2019, litigation was still pending, whereas activists had started to occupy parts of the forest anew.

German Sustainable Development Strategy (GSDS),⁶² introduced by the Social Democratic-Green Party coalition in 2001/2002,⁶³ highlighted the need for equal pay and for reconciliation of family and professional commitments and pledged to make gender mainstreaming mandatory for all federal ministries.⁶⁴ The lack of a gender dimension was criticized by one civil society organization, genanet, which remained a lone voice for a long time.⁶⁵ As one interviewee mentioned, the gender mainstreaming approach was not applied consistently, and the progress report of 2004 still considered the equal pay indicator as the sole gender-relevant indicator.⁶⁶

Around the time when the First German Sustainable Development Strategy was developed, but independently of this process,⁶⁷ the German Environment Agency (*Umweltbundesamt*; the scientific environmental authority under the Ministry for the Environment and a vanguard among governmental environment institutions) pioneered a research project in 2002 on gender relations and sustainability (*Geschlechterverhältnisse und Nachhaltigkeit*). The project looked at the synergies of gender justice and environmental policies, but this effort long remained a one-off affair with little impact on domestic gender equality policy. In fact, the resulting research report was not published at the time, but only over a decade later, in 2017.⁶⁸

62 The first strategy for sustainable development was a response to Rio+10 (Jo'burg) built on 1992 Rio Conference decisions and was housed in the Ministry for the Environment. The German Sustainable Development Strategy (GSDS) is updated every four years; the current strategy dates from 2016 (released January 2017). Die Bundesregierung [The Federal Government] 2017a, pp. 25. It is arguably the most important policy document for domestication of the 2030 Agenda as a whole.

63 Die Bundesregierung [The Federal Government] 2002.

64 As mentioned, this obligation now exists in the Common Rules of Procedure for Federal Ministries.

65 See genanet policy papers on the German sustainability strategy; genanet n.d.; genanet 2004.

66 Anonymous interviews, 3 July and 17 August 2018. See below for an analysis of the current Sustainable Development Strategy.

67 According to the resulting study, the main impetus for its commissioning was an EU strategy on gender mainstreaming from the year 2000.

68 Umweltbundesamt [German Environment Agency] 2004.

The German Environment Agency initiated a new project in 2016 to assess the role of gender justice as a driver for a successful climate policy.⁶⁹ This is in cooperation with the Wuppertal Institute for Climate, Environment and Energy, the Institute for Social-Ecological Research, and GenderCC.⁷⁰ A comprehensive literature review has been published.⁷¹ It will be complemented by the enhancement of the gender impact assessment instrument for climate policy as well as a methodology for additional data and their collection.

Gender plays an increasingly visible role in international climate policy, where Germany's engagement has been traditionally strong. Internationally, the Women and Gender Constituency within the UNFCCC – established in 2007/2008 and recognized by the COP15 (Copenhagen) in 2009 as one of currently nine civil society constituencies within UNFCCC – plays a crucial role in linking gender and climate justice concerns. While the Women and Gender Constituency is an international network, it was among others established by CSOs based in Germany.⁷² One could surmise from this that, globally and in Germany, the gender and climate nexus is anchored in the COP processes rather than in the 2030 Agenda.

In this connection, one major achievement internationally was the adoption of the Gender Action Plan (GAP) at COP23 (Bonn 2017), which notes “that gender-responsive climate policy continues to require further strengthening in all activities concerning adaptation, mitigation and related means of implementation (finance, technology development and transfer and capacity-building) as well as decision-making on the implementation of climate policies”.⁷³ In its 2017 report to the UNFCCC,⁷⁴ the German Government mentions SDG 5 twice (pp. 77 and 242), albeit vaguely, with respect to public awareness for and civil society participation in the review of the Climate Action Plan

69 This project was initiated from within the German Environment Agency and not pushed for by women's organizations.

70 GenderCC.

71 Röhr, Alber and Göldner 2018.

72 genanet, GenderCC, LIFE e.V. and WECF.

73 United Nations Climate Change 2017.

74 Bundesministerium für Umwelt, Naturschutz und nukleare Sicherheit [Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety] 2017.

of 2016 which was informed by certain SDGs, in particular SDG 5. The German umbrella organization of CSOs working on climate change issues, the Climate Alliance (*Klima-Allianz Deutschland*), a member of Climate Action Network International, has been invited to provide input to the Climate Action Plan and with regard to gender equality has recently begun setting up an internal working group on gender and climate change issues. However, capacities within civil society are restricted and the confidence in the GAP to work as an effective tool to translate gender equality issues into (national) climate policies is low.⁷⁵

2.3

Establishing the disconnects

We showed in the preceding section that there are some fragile links between the gender and climate change policy fields, mainly where they intersect internationally. In this section, we explore whether the same could be said for the gender and (ecological) sustainability fields, and find that the disconnect between these two fields is more pronounced. We proceed in two steps: the first sub-section focuses on four policy documents that could have made fruitful links between the gender equality and sustainability discourses, but did not. In a second step, we lay out the German sustainability architecture and find that it operates largely independently from the actors identified above who populate the gender equality architecture in Germany.

2.3.1 Weak and disjointed substantive guidance from the 2030 Agenda in domestic gender equality policy and politics

In the following, we review four policy documents that could have fruitfully addressed intersections between gender and sustainability: Germany's Voluntary National Review (VNR) submitted to the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) in 2016; the German Sustainable Development Strategy of 2017; the 2017 Gender Equality Report; and the current Government's coalition agreement of 2018.

⁷⁵ Anonymous interview, 3 July 2018.

Germany's Voluntary National Review (2016)

Germany was one of the first countries to submit a Voluntary National Review (VNR) in 2016, just one year after the 2030 Agenda was adopted. In its VNR, Germany identifies the following national challenges regarding gender equality (pp. 27-28):

- Increasing the number of women working outside the home; reconciling family and professional commitments by encouraging both partners to share responsibilities. Here, the Government emphasizes fiscal incentives⁷⁶ as well as its Act on Equal Participation of Women and Men in Executive Positions in the Private and Public Sectors;
- Combating violence against women. Here, the Government announces the pending ratification of the Istanbul Convention (Germany did ratify the Convention in 2017); and
- Closing the gap between women and men in terms of educational opportunities. Here, it mentions the National Pact for Women in STEM⁷⁷ professions.

Beyond SDG 5, women and gender equality concerns for the domestic level are only mentioned in relation to equal pay (under SDGs 1 and 8) and equal participation of women in the public sector (SDG 16) – thus in relation to topics that are also mentioned under SDG 5. No additional topics for domestic policy are mentioned. There is no discussion of the alarming trends in women's income poverty and pension poverty, issues that would fall under SDG 10 on reducing inequalities,⁷⁸ or the challenging situation of women migrants and asylum-seekers. Under SDG 3 and the heading "support for other countries", the German VNR takes up the issue of sexual and reproductive rights and health education, as well as education on sexual orientation and gender identity – but not as an issue in and for Germany, although links to the ongoing debate on safe abortion rights could easily have been made.

⁷⁶ ElterngeldPlus and Partnerschaftsbonus.

⁷⁷ Science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

⁷⁸ See on the gender dimension of SDG 10 and its gender-specific implications and indicator UN Women 2018, pp. 113-114.

The VNR can be considered a “light” version of the 2016/2017 German Sustainable Development Strategy, intended for international consumption, and therefore highlighting only those “challenges” where the German Government would be in a position to present policy responses and progress on outcomes.⁷⁹

The German Sustainable Development Strategy

The current German Sustainable Development Strategy (GSDS),⁸⁰ which was opened to public discussion during 2016 and finalized in 2017⁸¹ builds one-on-one on the 2030 Agenda, calling it its guiding principle (*Richtschnur*).⁸² The 17 SDGs are the organizing structure of the strategy, with at least one national target identified for each of the goals, and with 63 indicators selected. The GSDS discusses the SDG commitments on three levels, which correspond to the structure of the VNR: challenges for Germany; Germany’s global responsibility (the international impact of German actions); and support for other countries with regard to meeting the SDGs (development cooperation) – packaged as “in, by and with Germany”.

With regard to SDG 5, the GSDS outlines three major points: gender equality policy with a focus on equal participation in the workforce (both public and private sectors) and reconciliation of family and professional commitments with the aim of a fair division of tasks in partnerships with regard to “family work” (*Familienarbeit*); violence against women (with a focus on migrant and refugee women – this goes beyond the VNR); equal educational opportunities (especially in STEM subjects).⁸³

79 This is a tactic adopted by many countries, with the VNR process risking to become an exercise in international reputation management. See for example Obenland 2019.

80 Intriguingly, the German Government’s strategy is called a Sustainability Strategy (*Nachhaltigkeitsstrategie*) in German, and a Sustainable Development Strategy in English.

81 The VNR explicitly refers to the forthcoming Sustainable Development Strategy, pp. 2. Die Bundesregierung [The Federal Government] 2016b.

82 Beisheim noted that since October 2015, the Federal Government had convened five regional dialogues regarding the further development of the national sustainability strategy. “That is a beginning. However, the public discussions urgently need to be expanded, and the expert debates deepened.” (translation by the authors). Beisheim 2016, p. 5.

83 Die Bundesregierung [The Federal Government] 2017a, p. 97.

The monitoring indicators selected are limited to the gender pay gap and women in leadership positions, whereas with respect to development cooperation, there is an indicator on the number of women/girls in partner countries with vocational qualifications. In addition, the GSDS contains indicators on premature mortality and also one on obesity (adiposity) under its SDG 3. These as well as the indicator on the employment rate (SDG 8) are disaggregated by sex (pp. 72, 76–77, 138). The topics addressed in the GSDS only represent fragments of the rather rich debate on indicators contained for example in the Second Gender Equality Report (see below) and do not add anything substantive to the existing gender equality discourse. This is so despite the 40 new gender-specific indicators (in addition to the 14 indicators resulting from SDG 5 alone) presented in the 2030 Agenda.⁸⁴ Issues of intersecting inequalities; economic inequality; “old and new tools” – such as gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting – are not mentioned in the GSDS, despite these being discussion points in the general gender discourse, and the fact that successive CEDAW concluding recommendations have been advising Germany to introduce gender budgeting.⁸⁵ It is remarkable that the GSDS only focuses on the gender pay gap and does not mention the gender care gap, despite this being one of the major requests from the Second Gender Equality Report (see below) and it being discussed under SDG 5 (SDG 5.4 and Indicator 5.4.1 on unpaid domestic care work). Thus, the GSDS goes only marginally deeper than the VNR in terms of flagging domestic challenges in general, and specifically with respect to SDG 5.

The GSDS is under review in light of the international peer review findings and other discussions. A new national strategy is to be issued in 2020, and Germany plans to report again to the HLPF with a new VNR in 2021.⁸⁶

84 UN Women 2018, p. 50.

85 UN CEDAW 2017, at para 18c; CEDAW/C/DEU/CO/6 at paras 23, 24.

86 Die Bundesregierung [The Federal Government]. 2017a, p. 227. In the eyes of some observers, this bodes well for more traction for the Agenda.

Germany's Second Gender Equality Report

A more extensive document regarding gender policy priorities is the Second Gender Equality Report issued by the Family Ministry in 2017.⁸⁷ The report consists of two parts. An expert advisory opinion⁸⁸ by an independent and interdisciplinary expert commission, appointed by the Family Minister, forms the core of the report. In addition, the report contains a position paper by the Federal Government, in which it takes up the recommendations of the advisory opinion. While a relatively new process – the First Gender Equality Report was commissioned in 2008 and issued in 2011 – the Gender Equality Report is now considered a regular reporting mechanism to be issued once every legislative term, upon request from the Parliament.⁸⁹

The Expert Opinion operates on the premise that equality means substantive equality, i.e. that perspectives on the realization of differing ideas of a good life do not depend on one's gender.⁹⁰ It identifies discrimination, violence against women, structural barriers and gender stereotypes as main obstacles to achieving substantive equality and specifically asks which steps are necessary in order to come closer to a society in which women, men and those who do not subscribe to binary gender norms have the same opportunities for self-realization throughout different life phases ("*Verwirklichungschancen in der Lebensverlaufsperspektive*").⁹¹ The expert commission explicitly adopts an intersectional approach in which it considers gender as a social category that cannot be analysed without considering other social categories (such as social class, cultural background, or age) and their interdependence. Against this backdrop, the report identifies the gendered organization of care work and formal employment as a central field for action. One important recommendation relates to indicators: the expert commission emphasizes the importance of including not only the well-established Gender Pay Gap, but also the Gender Care Gap, the Gender Pension Gap and the Gender Overall Earnings

87 Die Bundesregierung [The Federal Government] 2017d.

88 Sachverständigenutachten.

89 Die Bundesregierung (2017), pp. 5, 21, 76.

90 Ibid., p. 77.

91 See for an English summary: Die Bundesregierung [The Federal Government] 2017c.

Gap into annual reporting; a Gender Care Gap was calculated for the first time at the request of the expert commission.⁹² It would go beyond the remit of this study to critically assess in detail the extensive recommendations made by the expert commission on the organization of formal employment and care work through a gender lens.⁹³ The expert commission further identifies the fields of digitalization, violence against women in relationships, the situation of refugee women, and institutional barriers to achieving gender equality (gender budgeting, gender mainstreaming in legislation, knowledge transfer) as fields for action.⁹⁴

Yet, throughout the expert opinion, no mention is made of the 2030 Agenda. This is surprising on several counts. The GSDS was being prepared in parallel under the umbrella of the State Chancellery. Also, the focus of the expert opinion lies on, *inter alia*, unpaid care work and the related Gender Care Gap, which directly concern SDG 5.4 and its indicator. Another topic woven throughout the expert opinion is the issue of intersecting inequalities, which could have benefited from parallel debates on SDG 10. While the discussion of the expert opinion's recommendations by the Federal Government makes a broad reference to the 2030 Agenda and SDG 5, as well as to CEDAW, and emphasizes that its gender equality policy is aligned with these international commitments,⁹⁵ there is no indication that the 2030 Agenda and its gender equality commitments provided substantive normative guidance. As one gender expert confirmed, the reference to SDG 5 in the government section was "mere poetry".⁹⁶

The 2018 coalition agreement: a blueprint for Germany's politics in the current legislative term

92 Die Bundesregierung 2017d, pp. 95-96, p. 4.

93 The recommendations comprise nearly 100 pages and relate to gender equality in formal employment, choice of formal employment and education, gender equality and self-employment, enhancing recognition for paid care work, childcare, care of the elderly, private household organization, re-entering formal employment, fiscal incentives for the separation of tasks for married couples and pension schemes. Ibid., pp. 116-215.

94 Ibid., pp. 215-239.

95 Ibid., p. 10.

96 Anonymous interview, 30 August 2018.

Finally, turning to the election year 2017, it is of interest to examine the coalition agreement. After a protracted negotiation process, the centre-conservative Christian Democratic Union led by Angela Merkel, and the centre-left Social Democratic Party with a new party leader, Andrea Nahles, in March 2018 agreed on government priorities for the legislative term 2017-2021.⁹⁷ Regarding the 2030 Agenda generally, the coalition talks did not use it as a point of reference for domestic policy. In its 175 pages, the coalition agreement mentions it only five times, primarily in the context of international trade and of development cooperation⁹⁸ (2030 Agenda as guidance for German trade policy, p. 18; Chapter XII on international cooperation: fair global order, p. 144; 2030 Agenda as the benchmark for German development cooperation: p. 159), and with respect to the environment (2030 Agenda and environmental protection as a benchmark, p. 137).

Having said that, as one CSO observer rightly pointed out, the concept of sustainability plays a major role in the agreement, albeit without quoting the Agenda.⁹⁹ Gender equality is flagged as “a matter of justice”, and the coalition agreement does acknowledge the structural obstacles that need to be overcome. It commits to develop a comprehensive gender strategy and a plan of action for federal ministries,¹⁰⁰ although the Chairwoman of UN Women’s German National Committee doubted whether this commitment would come to fruition.¹⁰¹ One area considered in the agreement is that of women in leadership positions,

with a commitment to achieve parity in leadership positions in the federal public service by 2025, and to introduce harsher monitoring and possible sanctioning of businesses that do not report disaggregated data on leadership and/or report “zero” women in leadership positions. Reconciling family needs and work is considered another priority, including support for part-time leadership positions. The agreement further addresses transparency on wage structures in larger businesses. It also raises sexism and the role of men and boys in fostering gender equality. Violence against women is a stand-alone topic, and in the follow-up to the ratification of the Istanbul Convention of the Council of Europe,¹⁰² the Government Coalition proposes to develop an Action Plan to prevent violence against women and children, support victims, improve existing support structures, in particular shelters for victims of domestic violence, and other measures.

It is also of interest to note that the coalition agreement does link the concepts of sustainability and of gender: it states that gender equality is a driving force for sustainable development and for future societal viability, both domestically as well as internationally.¹⁰³

However, the Coalition Agreement does not refer to the 2030 Agenda for any of these points, although it could easily have referenced SDG 5.5 for the issue of women in leadership positions, or SDG 5.2 for the issue of violence against women. This suggests that, while gender equality might well be seen to contribute to a broader notion of sustainability, the 2030 Agenda is not recognized for its potential as a normative anchor.¹⁰⁴ However, as political experts interviewed remarked, the point was not necessarily to quote the Agenda, but rather to see whether its spirit, its ideas

97 Koalitionsvertrag [Coalition Agreement] 2018. Gender equality is considered under the general heading of “Family and Children at the Centre”, the first section of the agreement, cf. pp. 23-26.

98 In January 2018, a network of 12 NGO umbrella organizations and social sector entities published an open letter regarding the coalition negotiations, calling on the political parties to use the 2030 Agenda as its “red thread” (guideline), listing each of the SDGs as a lacuna in government policy. VENRO-Verband Entwicklungspolitik und Humanitäre Hilfe et al. 2018.

99 Anonymous interview 28 June 2018. The latest parliamentary inquiry submitted by the Green Party to the German Federal Government also asserts that the coalition agreement subscribes to the 2030 Agenda, cf. Deutscher Bundestag 2019, section 3.3.

100 “ressortübergreifende Gleichstellungsstrategie... mit einem Aktionsplan.” Ibid., p. 24.

101 Interview with Karin Nordmeyer, Chairwoman UN Women National Committee Germany.

102 Council of Europe 2011.

103 Koalitionsvertrag [Coalition Agreement], p. 23.

104 This is not only true for gender equality, but also applies to other policy fields. At a public debate in January 2018 (<https://www.fes.de/oas/portal/pls/portal/filefunctions.download/PLAKON/VERANSTALTUNG/221592/F1687171635/einladung-frieden-gerechtigkeit-online.pdf>), when asked why the 2030 Agenda was not referenced in the coalition draft, Social Democrat Andrea Nahles replied that her party felt this was not a contentious issue, and had therefore not brought up the theme in the coalition talks. Personal notes by one of the authors.

are reflected substantively, and that to some degree, regarding gender equality issues, this was the case.¹⁰⁵

What can be gleaned from this document review then is that while the 2030 Agenda and domestic gender equality debates are addressing similar and sometimes the same issues – unpaid care work and gendered economic inequalities, to name just two examples – there is little cross-referencing between the two fields.

2.3.2 The German sustainability architecture

One possible explanation for this lack of cross-referencing stems from the fact that the German sustainability architecture is largely independent from the gender equality architecture sketched out above. In fact, one main hypothesis of this paper is that there is an important horizontal disconnect between the rather elaborate sustainability architecture in Germany on the one hand and the gender equality policy field on the other, with little institutional overlap. This section establishes this disconnect by mapping the major actors in the environmental protection and sustainability policy fields responsible for the domestication of the 2030 Agenda as a whole.

Government and legislature

One of the horizontal disconnects that puts a brake on any holistic approach to policymaking, and thus makes it operationally difficult to integrate the comprehensive and notionally indivisible or at least interconnected 2030 Agenda, lies in the elaborate German ministerial structure. Each ministry is established as an autonomous entity, and this principle often applies to ministerial departments as well.¹⁰⁶

A case in point is the institutional location of the German Sustainable Development Strategy. Originally housed in the Ministry for the Environment, it was

re-located to the Federal Chancellery. The three core conduits for its work are the State Secretaries' Commission (*Staatsekretärsausschuss*, the second-highest ministerial level), the Parliamentary Advisory Committee on Sustainable Development, and the Council for Sustainable Development.¹⁰⁷

The Council for Sustainable Development, an independent expert commission, was established in the course of the Rio+10 process in Johannesburg, which was the decisive impetus for Germany's first Sustainable Development Strategy. Strictly speaking, it is not a government body, but rather a channel or transmitter between the Government and civil society as well as the public at large. Its 15 members are appointed *ad personam* by the Chancellor; since they are affiliated in a personal capacity, they are autonomous in their views, which is an asset for independence, but also implies less traction than if the experts were associated with their home institutions – academia, businesses, etc.¹⁰⁸ The Council is endowed with public funding, but is independent in its policy stance and its operational work, and supported by 17 staff.¹⁰⁹ It convenes thematic consultations and hosts an annual conference on the Strategy.¹¹⁰ It was also charged with coordinating and serving as the secretariat to the International Peer Review of the 2016 German Sustainability Strategy which was released in June 2018.¹¹¹ Only a handful of high-income countries have a similarly formalized sustainability process, and it is possibly unique that a national strategy of a high-income country is put to the scrutiny of international experts from high- and low-income countries.¹¹²

107 The Federal Government 2017a, p. 26.

108 Anonymous interview, 4 June 2018.

109 Rat für Nachhaltige Entwicklung [German Council for Sustainable Development] 2019.

110 Last conference Berlin, 4 June 2018, see Rat für Nachhaltige Entwicklung [German Council for Sustainable Development] 2018c.

111 Rat für Nachhaltige Entwicklung [German Council for Sustainable Development] 2018b.

112 Peer Reviews on sustainability have been commissioned since the inception of Germany's sustainability strategies in 2002. This year's peer review was the 3rd international Peer Review on Germany. The peer review group for this round comprised experts from South Africa, Mexico, China, Canada, the Netherlands and the UK, and was chaired by Helen Clark, New Zealand (former Administrator, UNDP). Germany presented the peer review findings, as well as the process, at a side event at the HLPF in July 2018. More on the substantive recommendations of the peer review in Section III.

105 Anonymous interviews 28 June 2018 and 18 September 2018.

106 Mayer-Ries 2018. Mayer-Ries argues that the "Prussian" administrative approach, with relative autonomy of each ministerial department, makes it difficult to implement the 2030 Agenda. He also highlighted this obstacle in his statement at a Public Panel "Umsetzung der Nachhaltigkeitsagenda der Vereinten Nationen in Deutschland und anderswo in der Welt" organized by the German UN Association and others, Potsdam 7 September 2018.

While the overall responsibility for the strategy and for devising federal-level policy lies with the State Secretaries' Commission, the content work is prepared by an interministerial working group at the considerably lower heads-of-department level (*Unterabteilungsleiter-AG*).¹¹³ Each ministry appoints their own 'Sustainability Coordinators' ("*Ressortkoordinatoren Nachhaltigkeit*").

As an international agenda merging the Rio and MDG processes, the negotiations of the 2030 Agenda were jointly handled by the Ministry for Development Cooperation (as the lead entity for development cooperation and formerly the lead for the MDGs) and the Ministry for the Environment (as the lead entity for the Rio process and follow-up), in coordination with the Foreign Office. The Ministry for Development Cooperation and the Ministry for the Environment now have the lead for international engagement with the 2030 Agenda – and the two ministries together compiled the Government's 2016 voluntary HLPF review. Domestically, the lead is in the Chancellery, and for European affairs, it lies with the Ministry for the Environment.¹¹⁴

Civil society and research bodies: interface with the 2030 Agenda and the GSDS

In civil society, we need to look at both the gender and the sustainability actors. Feminist civil society organizations do not seem to rely on SDG 5 as a normative argument. For example, only 11 out of the 60-member organizations of the German Women's Council mention the 2030 Agenda in their online publications at all, and often only as an additional reference.¹¹⁵ Not one of our interviewees – be it from the gender or the sustainability field – was of the opinion that the 2030 Agenda did in fact move domestic gender equality struggles forward. One gender expert remarked that expectations of the German feminist movement were not met by SDG 5 since they did not feel it supported their current focus on the involvement of men and boys, or on the discourse around LGBTQI issues. The 2030 Agenda's interest in women's empowerment

was perceived as a topic for development cooperation but not for German gender debates.¹¹⁶ And even those who saw potential for the agenda in the realm of gender equality policy were sceptical that SDG 5 would gain traction in domestic discourse.

The landscape of German civil society organizations working on 'sustainability' is arguably even more fragmented than the field of women's NGOs – it ranges from locally-based initiatives, many of which stem from the Agenda 21 and remain active to this day,¹¹⁷ through campaign-type NGOs, to a number of large NGOs that are thematic or mandate-based. The paradigm shift associated with the 2030 Agenda, identifying 'development' as a universal issue for North and South, theoretically broadens the range of civil society organizations that could claim to be active in the field. However, for many smaller organizations, this is difficult to handle. Today, two umbrella organizations are actively engaged both domestically and internationally with the 2030 Agenda – one is the umbrella organization for civil society organizations that were traditionally located in the environmental policy field and engaged with the Rio and UNFCCC processes; the other is the umbrella organization for NGOs engaged in development cooperation.

The *Forum on Environment and Development* was established to monitor the Rio follow-up process.¹¹⁸ It now acts as the main civil society facilitator for the UN High-Level Political Forum.¹¹⁹ It used to have an active gender equality working group, which, according to one interviewee, has become inactive, but could be reactivated if there was a push from members.¹²⁰ Its Steering Group is exclusively composed of development cooperation and environmental organizations.¹²¹

113 *Ibid.*, p. 28.

114 Anonymous interview, 28 August 2018.

115 Research undertaken by Henrieke Erchinger, intern with UN Women National Committee Germany.

116 Anonymous interviews, 9 July and 30 August 2018.

117 Anonymous interview, 13 June 2018.

118 The Forum is funded by the Ministry for the Environment and legally attached to the German League for Nature and Environment. One civil society representative from a different organization said that the Forum would be inconceivable, had it not been for the Rio process. Anonymous interview, 28 June 2018.

119 See HLPF Guide by the Forum Umwelt und Entwicklung [German NGO Forum on Environment and Development] with information for civil society actors. Leone 2018.

120 Anonymous interview, 28 June 2018.

121 Forum Umwelt und Entwicklung [German NGO Forum on Environment and Development] 2015; German NGO Forum on Environment and Development 2015.

Those NGOs concerned with development cooperation and “development” projects, i.e. in low-income countries, have in addition and in their majority been organized via the umbrella organization VENRO (*Verband der entwicklungspolitischen Nichtregierungsorganisationen* – Association of development policy NGOs). It also includes humanitarian organizations and is linked to humanitarian, private and church-based development cooperation and humanitarian aid sectors.¹²² Both umbrella organizations are clearly rooted in the development/environment policy fields and thus represent but a fraction of the policy fields touched upon by the 2030 Agenda.

One organization that is tackling the 2030 Agenda holistically is the Global Policy Forum and its Reflection Group. It defines itself as “an independent policy watchdog that monitors the work of the United Nations and scrutinizes global policymaking, [promoting] accountability and citizen participation in decisions on peace and security, social justice and international law.”¹²³ While it acts internationally, having been an observer at the post-2015 processes and associated with the WMG during the Open Working Group Meetings 2012-2014,¹²⁴ it is of German origin and its German arm publishes briefing papers and hosts seminars, inter alia, on 2030 Agenda issues as they concern Germany.

In addition to “civil society proper”, several research bodies actively observe and analyse the 2030 Agenda processes, both domestically and internationally, and provide policy recommendations to political actors, most importantly to the Federal Government, on a regular basis. These think tanks receive financial support from the Government but are intellectually autonomous. The German Institute for International and Security Affairs is a research body assigned to advise German political decision-makers on international politics and foreign and security policy.¹²⁵ Its research group Global Issues deals with UN matters, followed the deliberations of the Open Working

Group for the 2030 Agenda, and now the HLPF, and has published extensively on the 2030 Agenda and its implications for international and German policymaking.

The German Development Institute¹²⁶ is primarily devoted to development issues and hosts the German branch of the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN). The German branch of SDSN was created in 2014, prior to the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, and describes its mission as: to “pool knowledge, experience and capacities of German academic, corporate and civil society organisations in order to contribute to the sustainable development of Germany as well as to German efforts for sustainable development across the globe.”¹²⁷ To do this, it convenes symposia and dialogues on the 2030 Agenda.¹²⁸ There is also a recently created Science Platform Sustainability 2030 comprising a group of research institutes and receiving institutional support from four line ministries.¹²⁹

122 VENRO – Verband Entwicklungspolitik und Humanitäre Hilfe 2018.

123 Global Policy Forum 2018.

124 Anonymous interview, 13 June 2018.

125 Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik [German Institute for International and Security Affairs] 2018.

126 Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik [German Development Institute].

127 Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik [German Development Institute] 2018b. Note that Professor Dirk Messner, Director of the GDI, was recently appointed to the UN University, Bonn campus. Interestingly with a view to promoting holistic approaches, Messner explained “The key aspect that attracts me to the United Nations University is the global network of 13 UNU institutes, all of which work on issues of *global sustainable development*.” [Italics are the authors’] “... various institutes and the University of Bonn are currently working to establish a joint ‘Innovation Campus Bonn’ for global sustainable futures.” Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik [German Development Institute] 2018a. It remains to be seen whether this would also lead to gender issues being more visibly highlighted in the work of the UNU Bonn.

128 Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik [German Development Institute] 2018b.

129 The platform was launched in 2017 by the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety (BMUB), the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF), the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture (BMEL) and the Federal Chancellery. IASS Potsdam (Institute for Advanced Sustainability Studies); also see IASS Potsdam 2016.

3.

BETWEEN IGNORANCE, ARROGANCE AND ENTHUSIASM: TRACING THE MISSING LINKS

Against this backdrop of mapping the horizontal and vertical disconnects, we now turn to possible explanations as to why these disconnects exist and why the 2030 Agenda has no discernible impact on domestic gender equality struggles in Germany. We identify several obstacles for the 2030 Agenda to act as a driver of transformative change in the realm of gender equality in Germany. While Germany enthusiastically promotes the 2030 Agenda internationally, its domestication faces a number of obstacles. Possible interconnected causes may include:

- With regard to gender equality, the German Sustainable Development Strategy and the Voluntary National Review do not contain ambitious aims if mirrored against existing domestic gender equality policy priorities: the German Sustainability architecture does not illustrate the value added of the 2030 Agenda as a transformative tool for gender equality struggles, and it does not connect well to existing gender equality debates.
- There is a lack of institutional exchange: interfaces between the gender equality and the sustainability architectures are limited to isolated spots and depend on chance, rather than being the result of a concerted effort. Often, it moves forward only where there is a policy entrepreneur committed to promoting the 2030 Agenda.
- In general, UN-level commitments in the field of gender equality have limited impact on domestic gender equality policy. It takes time for them to gain traction,¹³⁰ and other processes such as domestic

contestation, or the more direct interventions through EU legislation, are more formative. This is of course a phenomenon that characterizes any domain of norm diffusion – it takes time and often has a convoluted path – especially when a norm is not backed by a binding agreement.

As a result of these factors, we argue that the GSDS, as the major document implementing the 2030 Agenda domestically, “lacks teeth”, and therefore does not sufficiently promote the 2030 Agenda.¹³¹ It is not possible to single out one of these factors as a “main culprit”; instead, it is their co-occurrence that is likely to account for the lack of engagement of domestic gender equality debates with the 2030 Agenda.

Internationally, Germany projects itself as a promoter of the 2030 Agenda. This enthusiasm is helpful, insofar as it conveys a commitment to multilateralism, gives international publicity to a UN process which, after all, is non-binding, and signals an acknowledgement that Germany – economically, in GDP terms, one of the larger countries in the world – too needs to address its challenges.

¹³⁰ As one academic noted, one is still at the beginning of a process. For example, experts had made a comprehensive submission to the Peer Review stakeholder process, inviting individual ministries to take ownership of the Agenda, but this still needed to materialize. Anonymous interview 8 August 2018. As a civil society representative remarked, the SDGs are like a delicate plant that needs nurturing, anonymous interview 28 June 2018.

¹³¹ For this assessment see von Hauff et al. 2018, p. 150.

Germany set a positive international example as one of the first countries to present a Voluntary National Review at the 2016 High-level Political Forum. It initiated an international peer learning mechanism and publicized findings from that peer review at the 2018 HLPF. Another expression of this ‘enthusiasm’ is that the German Government made a point of inserting the 2030 Agenda into the programme and outcomes when it chaired the G7 and G20 meetings in 2015 and 2017.¹³² So, at face value, Germany is an “Agenda 2030 poster child”.

However, these forays in the international arena are not materially linked to domestic policy conceptualization or decision-making, as we tried to flag in the preceding analysis. It is a genuine puzzle: As the GSDS Peer Review noted, given that Germany has had a sustainability strategy for the past 16 years, has a complex institutional framework in place, is an economically potent country, and presents itself internationally as a vanguard of environmental sustainability, it is surprising that the country has not been more successful in meeting sustainability (meant in the broad sense) objectives.¹³³ Or put differently: “If Germany can’t pull out all the stops, who could?”¹³⁴ As an observer from a think tank noted, “sustainability as a topic does not have political leverage – it is not ‘sexy’, it does not make the media headlines”.¹³⁵ Perhaps it is not an agenda that captures the imagination of ministers, nor the effort of idealistic policy entrepreneurs, with a few exceptions.

Exploring in depth *why* the 2030 Agenda as a whole lacks traction domestically, despite the comprehensive institutional architecture of the GSDS anchored at the highest level of government (Federal Chancellery), would merit a separate study. Nevertheless, it appears that the heart of the problem lies both in the insufficiently ambitious substantive content of the GSDS,

and in the format of the sustainability architecture. As one expert commented, the substantive work, especially of the Council for Sustainable Development, was good, but hardly visible beyond those circles already supportive of the Agenda.¹³⁶ The GSDS falls short of functioning as a progressive policy tool that moves the boundaries for gender equality, not least because of the missing links to the Gender Equality Strategy and its machinery.¹³⁷

3.1

Lack of cutting-edge gender equality commitments in the German sustainability strategy

On the substantive side, neither the Voluntary National Review (VNR) nor the GSDS contain ambitious aims, if mirrored against existing domestic gender equality policy challenges. References to gender equality concerns remain superficial and do not relate to many of the diverse themes in gender equality debates underway in German CSO circles and public/media debates. The GSDS is less ambitious and narrower in scope than CEDAW, or the BPfA, or the COP’s GAP, which each have reporting instruments attached.

In the VNR, for instance, the Federal Government identified achieving gender equality as a national challenge and noted that “Genuine gender equality is one of the central challenges that Germany must successfully master if it is to become forward-looking, successful and equitable.”¹³⁸ This has been interpreted as: “we need to continue our work in the field of gender equality that we are already doing (regardless of the 2030 Agenda), and we will achieve the Agenda’s gender equality commitments.” It is not understood as: the 2030 Agenda leads us to do something differently – to meet the transformative remit and enable structural gender equality. This perception is reinforced by the Peer Review, which likewise does not highlight gender as a particular concern: while it does

132 Die Bundesregierung [The Federal Government] 2015 and 2017b.

133 Presentation by Helen Clark, 4 June 2018, video available at Rat für Nachhaltige Entwicklung [German Council for Sustainable Development] 2018c; Anonymous interview, 4 June 2018.

134 Rat für Nachhaltige Entwicklung [German Council for Sustainable Development] 2018a and 2018b, p. 11.

135 Informal conversation, 18 September 2018.

136 Anonymous interview, 4 June 2018.

137 Anonymous interview, 18 September 2018.

138 The Federal Government 2016b, p. 18.

recommend adding six new thematic areas, gender concerns appear only once in the peer review, with a recommendation to “address in a meaningful way the LNOB (leave no one behind) issues of jobs that are neither decent nor fairly remunerated, of gender gaps, and of the wider issues of limits to social cohesion – in particular the feeling of fragility and of living in precarious circumstances and times”.¹³⁹ The subsequent consultation paper by the Federal Government does not contain any mention of gender.

At the level of the 2030 Agenda itself, several NGOs and gender experts interviewed also feared that adopting a holistic SDG approach could lead to a loss of focus and stringency regarding their own specific agenda, topics and demands. As in any coalition-making, there would necessarily be some compromise, leading to adjustments in thematic focus and/or language which the CSOs concerned can pursue more forcefully and in a more vocal and precise fashion if it acts on its own. The stringency of their issue could be diluted – this was noted by one civil society representative as a negative impact of the interlinkage of issues within the 2030 Agenda.¹⁴⁰ Others were concerned that they would sacrifice their professional competence – and hence power of conviction – if they operated on too wide a thematic agenda.¹⁴¹ In addition, there is a capacity problem among civil society actors: one civil society representative from the gender equality field pointed out that participation in international processes, such as the HLPF, was resource-intensive, and without a clearly discernible value added, there was no incentive why one would do so.¹⁴² In a nutshell: CSOs are thematically fragmented, overstretched and underfunded. They are in funding competition with each other, and therefore need to have a unique selling point.

Both the German Sustainable Development Strategy as well as the Voluntary National Review ‘cherry-pick’ easily achievable targets on gender equality. The concern voiced by interviewees from the gender NGO constituency and academia is the lack of a clear

¹³⁹ Ibid., p. 18.

¹⁴⁰ Anonymous interview, 18 June 2018.

¹⁴¹ Anonymous interview, 28 June 2018.

¹⁴² Anonymous interview, 3 July 2018. Also see anonymous interview, 4 June 2018.

added value to be derived from pushing the 2030 Agenda, as compared to more detailed – and binding – earlier agreements, such as CEDAW. One observer commented that the question was to what extent a normative approach could serve to advance a reform agenda, and who would find the Agenda useful.¹⁴³

3.2

Institutional challenges: recommendations for improving the German sustainability architecture

The official sustainability discourse appears largely invisible beyond the expert circles that are directly part of the GSDS architecture. A recent poll published by the German Development Cooperation Evaluation Institute¹⁴⁴ found that less than 10 per cent of the general population knew what the 2030 Agenda was and more than 50 per cent had never heard of it, even if a majority supported the general idea of “sustainability”.¹⁴⁵

The institutional challenges facing the GSDS in particular are addressed in the 2018 International Peer Review. The peer review contains a considerable number of recommendations relating to the sustainability architecture, in addition to the substantive recommendations.¹⁴⁶ The Review observes that the institutional framing of the strategy is weak, lacking time lines, or incentives, let alone obligations to comply. It suggests introducing time lines by which a policy would need to be implemented. Further, there is no hierarchy of objectives. This point was also highlighted in stakeholder interviews which were

¹⁴³ Anonymous interview, 8 August 2018.

¹⁴⁴ Deutsches Evaluierungsinstitut der Entwicklungszusammenarbeit – DEval.

¹⁴⁵ DEval Policy Brief 6/2018.

¹⁴⁶ See summary by the Rat für Nachhaltige Entwicklung [German Council for Sustainable Development] 2018a. The Peer Review expressed concern that biodiversity is disappearing, land consumption decreasing too slowly and the carbon footprint stagnating. The Review also raised obesity issues and the widening social disparities as issues.

conducted as part of the peer review.¹⁴⁷ In addition, the Peer Review also recommended making the Council for Sustainable Development an autonomous, legal body directly attached to the State Chancellery, as opposed to the current arrangement where it formally reports to the German Development Cooperation Agency. This would give its “footprint more status”.¹⁴⁸ It recommended upgrading the State Secretary Commission to a standing body and the Parliamentary Committee into a standing committee instead of an advisory council, a proposal that has long been made by various civil society actors.¹⁴⁹ Additional proposals include a reform of the sustainability impact assessment, and introducing a process for visioning/scenario development for transformation pathways carried out jointly by several ministries – either within the GSDS or in the context of sectoral strategies.¹⁵⁰

Arguably, its farthest-reaching recommendation is the proposal to adopt the concept and objective of sustainability into the German Constitution.

The stakeholder interviews as well as responses to a questionnaire issued by the Council for Sustainable Development in association with the Peer Review yield further pointers as to why the GSDS might lack traction in domestic policy. For example, some respondents to the Council’s questionnaire criticized that “none of these institutions have any teeth”¹⁵¹ or noted that economic interest prevails over sustainability commitments. One expert noted that the state secretaries committee is not a separately appointed body; instead, this “committee” meets every month, and every three months devotes a session to the sustainability strategy; thus, the deliberations and outcomes are not of an overarching ministerial interest or

impact.¹⁵² Other, somewhat more vocal institutional reform proposals from questionnaire respondents called for a “right of legislative initiative” for the Environmental Ministry in ‘other’ policy areas, or a veto of the Environmental Ministry on decisions of major environmental concern.¹⁵³ This is because within the Cabinet, one ministry does not have binding authority over other ministries, and the Chancellor cannot on her own and authoritatively prioritize one mandate or objective over another, such that for instance sustainability concerns would overrule economic interests.¹⁵⁴ As such, the Chancellor can only issue broad guidelines, and only insofar as each ministry preserves its autonomy to a certain degree.¹⁵⁵

Immediately after the peer review release, the Chancellery published proposals for a revision of the Strategy.¹⁵⁶ Substantively, it proposes that the Strategy for Sustainable Development add six new thematic areas – land-use; sustainability education; food waste; research on sustainability; sustainable sourcing for public entities; and the right to food in low-income countries, with some targets and monitoring indicators for each.¹⁵⁷ Gender as an issue does not appear. Rather, the paper places a lot of emphasis on managerial improvements, such as the introduction of an impact analysis tool, and publishing the themes of the forthcoming state secretaries meeting.¹⁵⁸

147 See Rat für Nachhaltige Entwicklung [German Council for Sustainable Development] 2017.

148 Anonymous interview, 4 June 2018.

149 Rat für Nachhaltige Entwicklung [German Council for Sustainable Development] 2018b, p. 21; see also quotes in the 2016 Sustainable Development Strategy from VENRO and Stiftung Weltbevölkerung asking for an elevated status and increased competences for the Parliamentary Advisory Committee, at p. 30.

150 Ibid., p. 20. This recommendation tallies with the observations by Mayer-Ries. Government Innovation Lab.

151 Dr. Maja Göpel in Rat für Nachhaltige Entwicklung [German Council for Sustainable Development]. 2017, p. 35.

152 Anonymous interview, 4 June 2018. See list of six topics for second half of 2018 to the end of 2019 in Konsultationspapier.

153 SRU - Sachverständigenrat für Umweltfragen. Rat für Nachhaltige Entwicklung [German Council for Sustainable Development] 2017, p. 20-21.

154 Günter Bachmann at a public lecture convened by the Münchner Forum Nachhaltigkeit, Munich, 12 July 2018; notes by one of the authors. Plus, anonymous interview, 4 June 2018.

155 This so-called “Ressortprinzip” (principle of ministerial autonomy) is anchored in Article 65 of the German Constitution, which foresees that each minister “shall conduct the affairs of his department independently”. Differences in opinion are to be solved by the Federal Government in its entirety, i.e. by the Cabinet as a whole (*Kollegialprinzip*). This means that the Chancellor cannot authoritatively decide that e.g. sustainability concerns should overrule economic interests. Rather, such a prioritization would need to be decided by the Cabinet as a whole.

156 Die Bundesregierung [The Federal Government] 2018..

157 Ibid., pp. 7-9.

158 For 2018, these are: global health, cooperation on sustainability between federal, Länder and municipality levels; sustainable finance; sustainability policy at European and global levels; digitalization; sustainable mobility. Ibid., p. 5.

Some of the more radical institutional propositions, including the idea of elevating sustainability to a norm of constitutional status or converting the Parliamentary Advisory Committee into a Standing Committee, are not picked up in the Government's subsequent consultation paper. It remains to be seen to what extent the recommendations of the peer review are taken up in the future.

In terms of process, or architecture, to derive policy impact from the 2030 Agenda would require upgrading the concept – updating the German Constitution by incorporating a sustainability mandate;¹⁵⁹ or, at the very least, giving legislative clout to the committees tasked with the sustainability agenda.

3.3

Getting political parties to engage with the 2030 Agenda

Another major challenge, as hinted at, is knowledge of the 2030 Agenda beyond expert circles in government or civil society, which have explicit mandates in some way connecting them to the 2030 Agenda. It is different for political parties.¹⁶⁰

From the 2017 general elections, the parties' manifestos are pointers as to their awareness of or interest in the 2030 Agenda. The Social Democrats (*Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands*, SPD) flag a pioneering task for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in their programme 2017-2021.¹⁶¹ The Liberals (*Freie Demokratische Partei*, FDP) and the Left (*Die Linke*)

refer to the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs exclusively in relation to German development cooperation. The Christian Democrats (*Christlich Demokratische Union*, CDU) highlight the importance of the 2030 Agenda as a task for Germany, alleging at the same time that the Strategy for Sustainable Development is adequately taking care of the issues at stake – in particular taking global megatrends and their impacts on Germany into account.¹⁶² The manifesto of the right-wing AfD (*Alternative für Deutschland*) does not mention the 2030 Agenda or the SDGs at all.

The Green Party manifesto "The Future is made of courage" ("*Zukunft wird aus Mut gemacht*") of the Green Party (*BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN*)¹⁶³ frequently refers to the "UN's SDGs",¹⁶⁴ as well as to the Paris Agreement. The Green Party – as part of the parliamentary opposition – also shows consistent interest through its submission of official parliamentary inquiries¹⁶⁵ about achievements and efforts in nationalizing/domesticating specific SDGs, such as SDGs 1 and 12. This is unique since other inquiries mentioning the 2030 Agenda are always related to development cooperation and those referring to a particular environmental/sustainability or a gender equality issue do not refer to the overarching framework of the 2030 Agenda at all (neither the inquiry nor the reply). In its responses, the Government routinely points out that the GSDS is aligned with the structure of the 2030 Agenda – as though that of itself were sufficient. The Greens have also recommended the establishment of a council for peace, sustainability and human rights ("Rat für Frieden, Nachhaltigkeit und Menschenrechte") with the aim to assess compliance of governmental activities with the SDGs (p. 81). However, this is primarily with respect to external policy, and does not refer to gender justice.

As of May 2019, a reply by the Federal Government to the latest parliamentary inquiry submitted by members of the Green Party was still pending. This latest inquiry, submitted in February 2019, is more comprehensive than previous inquiries submitted by the Greens. It

¹⁵⁹ Technically, such an innovation has to be tabled by Parliament. It was already proposed by the Sustainability Council and discussed with the Parliamentary Advisory Committee, and the recent peer review picked up the council's earlier proposal. Interview academic expert, 8 August 2018. It ought to be noted that the suggestion to elevate sustainability to a norm of constitutional status is not uncontroversial. One ministry official remarked at a public debate that this suggestion had been on the table for several years, but that it was less than clear that "this would change anything". Mayer-Riess 2018.

¹⁶⁰ See Sustainable Development Solutions Networks Germany network entry in Rat für Nachhaltige Entwicklung [German Council for Sustainable Development] 2017, p. 28-30; Kloke-Lesch 2017, p. 6ff.; Anonymous interview, 28 June 2018.

¹⁶¹ Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (SPD) 2017.

¹⁶² See also Deutscher Bundestag [German Parliament] 2016b, p. 1ff.; Deutscher Bundestag [German Parliament] 2016d, p. 2.

¹⁶³ Bündnis 90/Die Grünen 2017.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., at pp. 11, 65, 67, 80, 81, 86, 88, 91, 101, 176.

¹⁶⁵ Deutscher Bundestag [German Parliament] 2016a and 2016c; Anonymous interview, 25 July 2018.

contains detailed questions on every single SDG, including SDG 5. With regard to SDG 5, the questions concern the Gender Pay Gap, representation in political institutions (Federal Government, political positions) and foreign policy.¹⁶⁶ There are no gender-related questions concerning the other SDGs, with the exception of SDG 16, where the inquiry asks about measures to implement Security Council resolution 1325 and more broadly on whether Germany pursues a feminist foreign policy.¹⁶⁷ While this latest inquiry shows that the Green Party consistently and comprehensively monitors the implementation of the 2030 Agenda as a whole, there is no connection between SDG 5 and current issues on Germany's domestic gender equality policy agenda. No questions are asked (e.g. concerning the Gender Care Gap, unpaid care work, or sexual and reproductive rights and health). We can thus observe that specifically on gender equality, the disconnect persists.

A further pushback in the parliamentary sphere, not within the 2030 Agenda remit strictly speaking, but nevertheless necessary to be flagged, is the emergence of right-wing populism. The Alternative for Germany (*Alternative für Deutschland* – AfD) was elected to the German Bundestag for the first time in the 2017 elections. In an aggressive tone, it questions the very principle of gender equity or of sexual and reproductive rights in parliamentary enquiries, asking: “how much money is wasted by the equality officials?” Such verbal attacks risk putting gender equality advocates into defensive mode.¹⁶⁸

The lack of greater interface with the Agenda can again be associated with the sustainability architecture: political parties are not included in the roundtable on the GSDS convened by the State Chancellery, nor were they consulted during the Peer Review process, in this instance ostensibly because the larger parties among them were involved in coalition talks and

hence preoccupied,¹⁶⁹ or because one did not wish to ‘politicize’ the discussion.¹⁷⁰

But beyond the institutional challenge, there is also a substantive challenge: only a few fora exist in which civil society, government bodies and political parties can debate conflicting policy objectives around sustainability – such as retaining employment and income levels after decommissioning environmentally harmful technologies/sectors.¹⁷¹

3.4

The role of civil society in the sustainability architecture

Another challenge is the participation of civil society from the field of gender equality in the sustainability architecture, which could potentially lead to new coalitions and progressive language in the Sustainable Development Strategy. The problem is not new: in fact, one of the few civil society organizations working on the sustainability-gender-nexus, genanet, already pointed to the lack of consultation of women's groups in the first sustainability strategy drafting in the early 2000s.¹⁷²

Currently, the Federal Chancellery's Sustainability Forum consultation comprises 55 non-governmental umbrella organizations and/or associations. Not a single institution from the women's or gender movement was included in 2018. How the representatives

166 Deutscher Bundestag 2019, p. 5.

167 *Ibid.*, p. 14.

168 Kleine Anfragen 2018a and 2018b; enquiries on gender studies were submitted in the Länder-parliaments of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Northrhine-Westphalia, Saxony (3), Hamburg (4), Thuringia; in addition, approximately 24 enquiries regarding the work of gender equality officials. Also raised as an issue in an anonymous interview, 30 August 2018.

169 Anonymous interview, 4 June 2018.

170 Anonymous interview, 28 June 2018.

171 «One of the few examples of an integrated approach to tackling policy problems is the Special Commission on Growth, Structural Economic Change and Employment, called the Coal Commission (Kohlekommission) for short. It took up its work in June 2018. It comprises environmental protection agencies, trade union representatives, business and energy representatives, local authorities and academics. The task is to find a pathway towards decarbonization and meet the CO₂ reduction goals committed for 2030, while at the same time looking at the impact on employment and structural change. Its composition and mandate are embattled. Bundesministerium für Umwelt, Naturschutz und nukleare Sicherheit [Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety] 2018. The Commission issued its final report in January 2019: https://www.kommission-wsb.de/WSB/Redaktion/DE/Downloads/abschlussbericht-kommission-wachstum-strukturwandel-und-beschaeftigung.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=4.

172 genanet 2004.

were selected is not transparent,¹⁷³ and it is certainly a surprise that not even the Women’s Council,¹⁷⁴ let alone other gender-related NGOs or the UN Women National Committee Germany, seem to be involved. According to one observer, each ministry can invite its respective stakeholder group, so invitations to the consultations hinge upon the various specific portfolios and do not appear to follow a selection procedure with pre-set criteria. Another observer¹⁷⁵ mentioned, by hearsay, that the Chancellor’s Office had argued that “there were simply too many NGOs” to have a meaningful selection process. A new “dialogue group” was convened in mid-2018; and, as one very large and influential NGO rightly pointed out: “Civil society will face the challenge of helping to ensure that this ‘dialogue group’ has a representative membership.”¹⁷⁶ Several NGOs and interviewees have criticized the “closed shop” and non-transparent nature of consultations on the 2030 Agenda and on the Sustainable Development Strategy. For example, the CEDAW Alliance – the alliance of women’s organizations who submitted an alternative report in the last German CEDAW review process in 2017 – explicitly called for “greater transparency by monitoring and efficiently evaluating gender-sensitive implementation of the SDGs in connection with Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development”, “greater involvement by the public at large, and especially women’s organizations and gender experts, in achieving the goals of Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development” and “application of gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting based on quantitative and qualitative indices for all SDGs, and ensuring participation by women’s organizations in this process.”¹⁷⁷

173 Interviewees observed for example that there was insufficient engagement in the peer review process with NGOs from the social sector since they did not feel addressed by the GSDS. Anonymous interviews, 4 June and 18 September 2018.

174 As confirmed through an interview, the Women’s Council in the past had been invited and provided input on several indicators.

175 Anonymous interview, 28 June 2018.

176 Brot für die Welt, see Rat für Nachhaltige Entwicklung [German Council for Sustainable Development] 2017, p. 53.

177 CEDAW Allianz 2016, p. 34. The Women’s Council (*Frauenrat*) has initiated a new CEDAW alliance. As of September 2018, roughly 35 NGOs had signed up. Email from the Women’s Council to members and other interested NGOs, dated 27 September 2018, on file with authors.

There is only a small set of larger NGOs which are sufficiently established, recognized, resourced and staffed to be invited to review processes and fora in the realm of sustainable development, and to convene their own consultations. Women’s organizations, which belong to a different NGO community, are not in this set. An exception are developmentalist NGOs, or their umbrella, VENRO, which have historically engaged with women’s and girls’ rights in their projects – but in the area of development cooperation and thus abroad, not in Germany.

Civil society itself also faces a problem: the paradigm shift associated with the 2030 Agenda, identifying ‘development’ as a universal issue, has moved the domestic discourse. Similar to the challenge facing government to organize and prioritize for sustainability across its mandates and the competing interests of ministries and constituencies, civil society faces thematic and organizational challenges.

The NGOs focused on “domestic” and “social” issues – poverty in Germany, gender empowerment and women’s rights, LGBTIQ concerns, protection from gender-based violence, climate change action, peace and conflict, asylum rights – tend to remain in their respective programmatic areas and with their constituencies, and tend to come together only in (often very effective but time-limited) campaigns.¹⁷⁸ In contrast to the developmentalist agenda, the broad remit of sustainability in the sense of addressing social, economic, political and climate agendas, makes it more difficult for the NGOs organized around such objectives to cohere under a common umbrella. The difficulty is mainly related to capacity constraints in terms of staff and time to take on new and cross-cutting areas of work. Some observers are noting a professionalization of CSO staff, such that they concentrate on their areas of expertise, rather than operating in a more activist role that would be led by current and perhaps cross-cutting issues.¹⁷⁹ There is also the constraint of financial resources which have been time-bound, and tend to be

178 Broad coalitions across mandates campaigned with respect to G7 and G20 summits, TTIP, CETA, but did not create an umbrella organization.

179 Interview Kai Schäfer, *Die Entwicklungszusammenarbeit der Stadt München*. Radio broadcast, 17 October 2017. Radio Lora. <http://lora924.de/?p=40005>.

earmarked, so that adding new issues is not an option because of budgeting and reporting requirements. NGOs are in competition with each other for limited and decreasing financial resources. One interviewee mentioned time budget constraints, given the low staffing at smaller NGOs, and language issues when the exchange was to be held in English.¹⁸⁰

Last but not least, some segments of civil society in Germany are associated with post-growth or de-growth movements,¹⁸¹ coming either from the social solidarity movement or from direct critiques of a capitalism-driven rationale for economic growth.¹⁸² These movements tend to disengage from the 2030 Agenda expressly because of SDG 8, which posits employment as premised on economic growth.¹⁸³ There is no gender-specific angle to this discourse, apart from a general concern with work-life-balance, but it is relevant in terms of understanding some of the obstacles to the 2030 Agenda's percolation in general.

3.5

UN-level commitments in the field of gender equality (and beyond)

We have already pointed to the fact that Germany, despite being on schedule on its reporting obligations under various international agreements, such as UNFCCC or CEDAW, is lagging behind on its substantive commitments in the field of climate policy.¹⁸⁴ We observe that international, and especially UN-level policy processes, rarely make headlines in the field of domestic gender equality struggles. The 2018 Coalition Agreement makes only scant reference to global norms and agendas. In the field of gender equality, it contains a wholesale reference to “international ratified instruments” but without spelling out which

instruments these might be. The Istanbul Convention of the Council of Europe is mentioned, but CEDAW, often cited as the most important UN-level instrument in the field of gender equality by women's organizations' representatives, is not.

This points to another factor that might account for the lack of reference to SDG 5 in domestic gender equality struggles: international agreements, especially those at the UN level, have in general little traction among domestic gender equality actors. One civil society representative explained that EU-level instruments had a greater role to play because they are legally binding.¹⁸⁵

But even those UN-level instruments which are legally binding took time to gain traction in Germany. For example, CEDAW was ratified by the FRG in 1985. In 2004, almost 20 years after its ratification, a women's rights activist complained that CEDAW was largely unknown to the relevant professions (i.e. lawyers) and even among activists and human rights groups.¹⁸⁶ This is true not only for CEDAW, but for all international human rights treaties at the UN level – they are regularly eclipsed by the much more forceful regional human rights instruments, notably the European Convention on Human Rights and the EU Fundamental Rights Charter.¹⁸⁷

While there is today much more awareness among civil society actors on the role of CEDAW, in part due to the important publicity work carried out by the German Institute for Human Rights, the CEDAW Committee to this day calls for increased awareness and knowledge of the Convention, in particular in the legal profession,¹⁸⁸ one example of a recommendation that remains largely ignored by domestic politics. A

¹⁸⁰ Anonymous interview, 18 June 2018.

¹⁸¹ D'Alisa, Demaria and Kallis 2015, pp. 17–38.

¹⁸² Paech 2012; Schneidewind and Zahrt 2013; Felber 2014; Brand and Wissen 2017; Kopatz 2018. Also see Koehler 2016a, pp. 149–164; Martens 2017.

¹⁸³ Anonymous conversation, 26 June 2018.

¹⁸⁴ See above, Section 2.2.2.

¹⁸⁵ Anonymous interview, 3 July 2018.

¹⁸⁶ Böker 2005, p. 8.

¹⁸⁷ In 2004, the German Institute for Human Rights, Germany's National Human Rights Institution, hosted a series of follow-up meetings to various treaty body procedures (Germany received several Concluding Observations in relatively short succession), and the “CEDAW-event” was the most successful – with 50 participants, cf. Deutsches Institut für Menschenrechte [German Institute for Human Rights] 2005, p. 3.

¹⁸⁸ UN CEDAW 2017, paras. 9–10.

representative of the Family Ministry considered it a success that information on the CEDAW process was now – over 30 years after ratification – centrally available on its website via a short and easy link.¹⁸⁹ And a civil society representative said it was “an achievement” that the Second Federal Gender Equality Report made references to CEDAW at all.¹⁹⁰ This suggests that despite progress regarding awareness of CEDAW – including a CEDAW Alliance which submitted a comprehensive shadow report and has reconvened for the next reporting cycle – the Convention is far from being a lodestar for the German gender equality movement. Yet, CEDAW did gain traction over the years and it is conceivable that its impact will become more prominent in the future. Thus, it might be considered as a slow, but ultimately positive example of norm transformation. Nonetheless, it took several decades for CEDAW, which is formally binding law in Germany, to gain serious traction. If the normative guidance provided by legally binding documents is this low, this does not bode well for non-legally binding documents, such as the 2030 Agenda.

Beyond questions of formal legality, it further appears that UN processes and normative frameworks may not be of immediate concern to political parties in a sustained, multi-partisan fashion. Two civil society commentators¹⁹¹ felt that this may have to do with the history of political movements in Germany. These have tended to be anti-statist – such as the post-war peace movement, the 68-generation movement, or the movement against nuclear energy, and as grassroots initiatives tended not to engage with existing political parties which they assessed as part of “the system”. The anti-nuclear power plant movement in fact created its own political party, the Green Party.

Regarding political parties, they are, notionally, informed by the interests and concerns of their local

¹⁸⁹ Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend [Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth] 2017.

¹⁹⁰ CEDAW is mentioned twice in the expert opinion: in the context of discrimination (p. 79) and in the context of gender stereotypes (explicit reference to Art. 5 CEDAW on positive measures to end discrimination; p. 82).

¹⁹¹ Interview Eva Quistorp, 6 July 2018 and anonymous interview, 28 June 2018.

groups, which do not necessarily relate to a global agenda.¹⁹² In UN negotiation processes, it is ministries that negotiate, and while ministers’ party positions will influence their stance, the process of appropriation is via the ministerial machinery, not via their respective political parties.¹⁹³

Another factor might be that those organizations which are naturally close to UN topics and could serve as policy entrepreneurs – in the field of gender equality, UN Women National Committee Germany, and more generally for UN topics, the German UN Association (UNA Germany)¹⁹⁴ – are often not perceived as major players in a given thematic field. One gender expert noted the limited role of the UN Women National Committee Germany in the wide field of gender equality politics.¹⁹⁵ Neither UN Women nor the UN Association were systematically included in the GSDS consultations or roundtables or in the peer review process and did not contribute to the online stakeholder process for the GSDS peer review.

¹⁹² Anonymous interviews, 26 June 2018, 28 June 2018.

¹⁹³ An exception here is the process of negotiating the MDGs, where the Utstein group – comprising three women social democratic development ministers – was decisive in shaping the social policy orientation of the Millennium Agenda.

¹⁹⁴ The UN Association of Germany (UNAG) (DGVN), established in 1952, had in past years focused on peace and security, human rights and development – along the three pillars of the UN Charter – later adding climate change. In 2014, the Association began working on the post-2015 agenda, convening a sub-group of its governing body (*Vorstand*). Already during the 2030 Agenda negotiation process, the governing board encouraged the Ministries of Environment and Development to push for a progressive agenda (letter with the authors); and the secretariat of the UNAG began organizing expert meetings and briefings. It also facilitated the translation of a UN report on the transformational aspects of the 2030 Agenda into German and organized its presentation to academia, the RNE and to the Parliamentary Subcommittee on UN Matters 2017. Gender, however, was not prominent in these outreach events. In 2016, the UNAG organized a large youth meeting, “It’s up to youth”, which had gender and the UN, and the 2030 Agenda and sustainability, as central workshop themes. The conference led to a new modality of UNAG members’ working groups. The first such working group, on gender equality, was established in early 2017 and featured mostly young members of the UNA. Working groups on sustainability and climate and on UN reform were established in 2018, both of which are dealing with the 2030 Agenda. The UNA’s project for classrooms containing teaching modules and trainings on the UN for secondary school teachers are currently preparing a Gender Module.

¹⁹⁵ Anonymous interview, 18 August 2018.

4.

CREATING INTERFACES BETWEEN THE GENDER EQUALITY AND SUSTAINABILITY POLICY FIELDS – FINDING ADDED VALUE FOR BOTH SIDES

The preceding section presented evidence that a range of factors accounts for the lack of traction of the 2030 Agenda’s gender equality commitments in the German domestic discourse. The problem is both substantive and institutional: the current sustainability architecture, as sophisticated as it may look on paper, does not succeed in creating coherence within the Government, and thus has no meaningful impact on domestic policy thinking with regard to sustainability overall, and gender and sustainability in particular. Germany’s 2030 Agenda commitment thus largely comes across as a rhetorical exercise when looking at its domestic policy impact – which, after all, is the major paradigm shift offered by the 2030 Agenda. Domestic social and gender equality policy does not appear to be influenced by the 2030 Agenda, despite the German Sustainable Development Strategy and its sophisticated institutional architecture. As one interviewee, working on SDG implementation at the local level, commented: “Germany likes to hide behind its beautiful architecture”.¹⁹⁶

One issue that continuously resurfaces is a lack of institutional interfaces: The 2030 Agenda as a whole has yet to gain traction, even across different ministries, and then beyond established circles of experts and civil society “bubbles”. Many government officials in particular noted mildly improved contacts across ministries, but also emphasized that there was still much room for improvement.¹⁹⁷ Some noted that

perhaps the process would intensify over time.¹⁹⁸ This is even more true for civil society and parliamentary engagement. But at the moment, interfaces between the gender equality and the sustainability architectures are limited to isolated points, and depend on chance, rather than being the result of a concerted effort. As one expert on sustainability commented, the problem is in part due to the fact that there is little to

¹⁹⁶ Anonymous interview, 24 August 2018.

¹⁹⁷ Informal conversation, 7 September 2018. Also see Mayer-Ries 2018.

¹⁹⁸ Anonymous interview, 7 September 2018.

no gender expertise in sustainability policy circles.¹⁹⁹ And a government official confirmed that it “would be good if the sustainability strategy were checked thoroughly with a gender lens”.²⁰⁰ This is a long-standing problem: As one civil society representative, working on the climate-gender nexus, put it: “Gender concerns are only taken seriously when we first show the value added”.²⁰¹

4.1

Cautious optimism: emerging “new coalitions” and dynamism at the sub-federal level

Despite the observed disconnects, there are segments of civil society that are already engaged in, or are trying to set up new coalitions. Some NGOs devoted to development cooperation have begun working in Germany and on German policy, continuing the mobilization, advocacy and substantive activities they had entertained during the post-2015 negotiations. They have been hosting events, mostly in the form of workshops and consultations, even before the adoption of the 2030 Agenda. Perhaps signalling a new trend, the Forum Environment and Development conceptualized a conference on a sustainable future for all (September 2018) which sought to “build on new forms of cooperation, transcending the sectors”.²⁰² The focus is on rural-urban challenges to the 2030 Agenda. Gender does not feature explicitly, judging by the programme,²⁰³ but the initiative does bring together officials from three federal ministries – Family; Environment; Development, as well as municipal government representatives and civil society.

The German wing of the Global Policy Forum is engaged with a shadow reporting process, assessing the 2030 Agenda and its impact in Germany in different domains. The reports bring together NGOs

from across the German development, environmental, human rights and social policy fields.²⁰⁴ Organizations working specifically on gender equality, while contributing chapters on specific issues, have not, to date, co-sponsored the reports: There is no *institutional* arrangement for including women’s organizations systematically.

A different example is the DEAR project launched by a newly established coalition comprising the Workers’ Welfare Organization (*Arbeiterwohlfahrtsorganisation* – AWO), the Forum Environment and Development, and Women Engage for a Common Future (WECF). Funded by a three-year programme under the umbrella of SDG Watch Europe,²⁰⁵ these three organizations are leading cross-sectoral campaigns, policy

²⁰⁴ Forum Menschenrechte, Forum Umwelt und Entwicklung [German NGO Forum on Environment and Development], VENRO 2016. This issue features SDG 5 “in North and South” as a chapter: See Neuenroth 2016. “Geschlechtergerechtigkeit – ein Thema in Nord und Süd.” in *Ibid*, pp. 48-55. The 2017 issue was compiled by a broad coalition of 11 NGOs, including the Global Policy Forum, trade unions, business CSR, youth, human rights, and development cooperation. VENRO et al. 2017. Gender or SDG 5 are not addressed in that issue. The 2018 report (VENRO et al. 2018) has nine co-sponsors (CorA – Netzwerk für Unternehmensverantwortung, Deutscher Bundesjugendring, Deutscher Naturschutzring, Forum Menschenrechte, Forum Umwelt und Entwicklung, Gewerkschaft Erziehung und Wissenschaft, Global Policy Forum, Plattform Zivile Konfliktbearbeitung und Verband Entwicklungspolitik und Humanitäre Hilfe, and is structured along the 17 SDGs. The introduction, jointly authored by the co-sponsors, flags gender and women’s equality issues. The chapter on SDG 5 discusses menstrual rights.

²⁰⁵ In 2015, 70 CSOs from different sectors within the EU organized themselves into the alliance SDG Watch Europe (www.sdgwatcheurope.org). This alliance includes NGOs from 19 EU countries working on development, environment, social, human rights and other themes, with the goal to hold governments to account for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. SDG Watch Europe aims to be an important partner of the EU and of civil society nationally and globally in implementing and monitoring the 2030 Agenda. SDG Watch Europe realized early that successful implementation of the SDGs will need all sectors of society to be actively engaged and to understand the interlinkages and potential of transformative change. Twenty-eight partners of the alliance designed a project and applied for funding from the EU under the Development, Education and Awareness Raising (DEAR) Programme (www.ec.europa.eu/europeaid/sectors/human-rights-and-governance/development-education-and-awareness-raising_en) of the Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development. The three-year programme builds on the strategic cooperation in this broad European civil society cross-sectoral alliance and aims at strengthening the alliances’ activities in the project cycle from 2017 to 2020. The specific objective is to mobilize EU citizens and key policymakers to realize the transition to more sustainable lifestyles, and to develop and promote policies for the concrete implementation of the SDGs.

¹⁹⁹ Anonymous interviews, 4 June and 17 August 2018.

²⁰⁰ Anonymous interviews, 17 and 28 August 2018.

²⁰¹ Anonymous interviews, 26 and 28 June and 3 July 2018.

²⁰² Forum Umwelt und Entwicklung [German NGO Forum on Environment and Development] 2018.

²⁰³ Forum Umwelt und Entwicklung [German NGO Forum on Environment and Development] et al. 2018.

advocacy, local actions and other activities designed to communicate the 2030 Agenda nationally and to translate the SDGs into action.

These are efforts to move outside a traditionally more limited mandate and remit, and approach other players, jump out of the box and seek alliances that can further one's cause. These 'creative coalitions' are observed in several arenas,²⁰⁶ and if they were to become more widespread in the context of the 2030 Agenda, could bolster overall and gender-specific progress – provided they paid due attention to women's rights and gender equality issues.

Things also look better at the sub-national level, according to several observers, i.e. the federal states (Länder) and the municipalities. As an outcome of the Rio and UNFCCC processes, Agenda 21 groups were established in many communities in the 1990s, and some of these remain active to this day. The grassroots group *Lokale Agenda21 - Feldkirchen-Westerham*, as one example, has been working continuously on sustainability issues since 1991.²⁰⁷ One optimistic civil society commentator noted that the 2030 Agenda, the GSDS and the work of the Regional Networks on Sustainability (*Regionale Netzwerke Nachhaltigkeit – RENN*) were imbuing the "old Agenda 21 with new energy", partly because the Government was devoting considerable financial resources to the process of localization.²⁰⁸ There is a concern, however, that the actionism around the 2030 Agenda may be nothing more than "participation" – "keeping NGOs busy without allowing for genuine change".²⁰⁹ There was a risk that this could backfire especially with locally active NGOs who would at some point feel betrayed.

Other local actors however said that the spirit of the "old Agenda 21" could not be renewed by the 2030 Agenda; it took long for local authorities to grasp the

206 One international example of such new coalitions is that previously siloed activist communities are coalescing, such as the women's and LGBTIQ movements coalescing with Black Lives Matter. Koehler 2018.

207 See Rat für Nachhaltige Entwicklung [German Council for Sustainable Development] 2017, pp. 101ff.

208 Anonymous interview, 28 June 2018 and informal conversations.

209 Interview Wolfgang Obenland, 28 June 2018.

terminology of the Agenda 21 and they were not ready to adapt a new set of principles and terms.²¹⁰

Since the de-central level exceeds the remit of this paper, we provide only a few pointers:

- Twelve of the 16 Länder have adopted some form of sustainability strategy.²¹¹ The Parliament of the state of Bavaria for example adopted the Bavarian SDGs; the Senate (parliament) of Hamburg adopted the 2030 Agenda for this city state.²¹² Some Länder strategies are housed in the environment ministry, others in the office of the state's president.
- The Regional Network for Sustainability (Regionales Netzwerk for Nachhaltigkeit "RENN"), created in 2016, managed by the Council on Sustainable Development (RNE) and funded by the Federal Government, covers the 16 Länder, via offices in the four regions (North, South, East, West) as a network.²¹³ Its role is to "connect actors and bring about social dialogue; give impulses for social transformation; promote innovation, strategies, projects and an exchange of ideas and enhance the flow of information between actors and initiatives at federal, Länder and municipal levels" (translation by authors).²¹⁴ One of the RENN activities is to organize national days of sustainability which reported over 1,800 locally-initiated activities in 2017 and almost 2,000 events in 2018.²¹⁵ This can become a conduit for public awareness of the German SDS and indirectly for the 2030 Agenda,²¹⁶ although obviously not all of these initiatives are inspired by the GSDS or refer to the 2030 Agenda.

210 Anonymous interviews, 26 June and 24 August 2018.

211 Brandenburg, Baden-Wuerttemberg, Bavaria, Hesse, Rheinland-Pfalz, Lower Saxony, Northrhine-Westfalia, Saarland, Sachsen, Sachsen-Anhalt, Thüringen, as of September 2016 (DNS: 46); also Hamburg: *Umsetzung der Sustainable Development Goals für Hamburg*. <https://www.hamburg.de/agenda2030/>.

212 Bürgerschaft der freien und Hansestadt Hamburg 2017.

213 Regionale Netzstellen Nachhaltigkeitsstrategie [Regional Network on Sustainability].

214 Regionale Netzstellen Nachhaltigkeitsstrategie [Regional Network on Sustainability] 2018.

215 Rat für nachhaltige Entwicklung [German Council for Sustainable Development].

216 Sustainability days also take place in France and Austria. See Die Bundesregierung [The Federal Government] 2016a.

- At the municipality-level, the Association of German Cities (*Deutscher Städtetag*) in September 2015 drafted a model resolution (*Musterresolution*)²¹⁷ entitled “2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: Building Sustainability at the Local Level” which member cities can sign as a commitment to a sustainable agenda, and to help initiate activities and measures for sustainability, such as awareness-raising, political and management strategies, or actions in the field of reductions of CO₂ emissions or strengthening global partnerships. So far, 115 city parliaments have joined the initiative.²¹⁸ However, as mentioned, there are over 11,000 municipalities in Germany and even when a commitment is adopted, its realization hinges on political will in the legislature, on the department to which the Agenda is attached, on resources and expertise in the municipal administration, and on the nature and degree of civil society engagement and pressure. And: women’s rights or gender equality are not even mentioned in the model resolution.

4.2

Conclusions

This study established that the gender equality commitments from the 2030 Agenda have not, as of yet, yielded discernible changes in domestic gender equality politics in Germany. We have identified a range of possible reasons: little traction of the 2030 Agenda for domestic politics at large, no progressive gender equality commitments in the domestic version of the 2030 Agenda – the GSDS – few institutional linkages between policy entrepreneurs from the (environmental) sustainability and gender equality fields, and a generally subordinate role of UN-level instruments in the field of gender equality. We hypothesize that it is the co-occurrence of these factors that together may account for the lack of traction of the 2030 Agenda on domestic gender equality commitments.

The 2030 Agenda’s holistic approach and the transformative remit – necessary and welcome as it is politically – face an *a priori* delivery challenge. On

substance, ministries and progressive civil society – notably the feminist movement – would need to come together to fundamentally challenge many premises. One arena would be to address, for example, the Government’s overarching commitment to economic growth, and its resistance to speedily implementing policies in favour of the environment – addressing climate change or biodiversity loss. Another arena would be to tackle the general public’s apparent acceptance of/resignation to an economic rationale²¹⁹ and patriarchal hierarchies.

In the Government, executive decisions may shift as a result of party politics, depending on current power constellations, which in turn might influence the take-up of the agenda. This is a particular feature in the German parliamentary system with its coalition governments. Ministries will be headed by different parties who may or may not be close to and supportive of international and UN processes. In a centrist-conservative coalition, for example, despite professed commitments, there is no drive to alter the economic orientation. Promises to be inclusive and ‘leave no one behind’, as per the 2030 Agenda, are challenged by the rise of nationalist voices which are making many of the established political parties move to the right in a (vain) effort to retain their established constituencies, and gender equality is under direct attack by one of the parties in Parliament.

At the administrative level, there are obstacles, since individual ministries and departments within ministries tend to feature distinct mandates and disconnected sub-agendas, and are inclined to defend their autonomy, or comply with their political party’s stance.

For political parties, the issue is around their programmatic profile. The local groups of political parties are generally more concerned with immediate local-level issues, and international UN norms are not generally part of the general public’s political referencing.

The challenge is a different one for civil society which does organize around themes and issues, and in

²¹⁷ Städtetag 2015.

²¹⁸ Engagement Global.

²¹⁹ See for example Koehler 2016b, pp. 53-68.

general has a progressive, transformative intent – even if they disagree what the transformation would entail. Feminist, ecological and generalist civil society is committed to social and climate justice, but prefer or are driven to focus on single issue campaigns. They are thus constrained in becoming a driving force for an overall anchoring of the 2030 Agenda as a holistic, indivisible agenda, and mainstreaming gender. All this makes it more difficult to participate effectively in the ‘percolation process’.

4.3

Next steps

One obvious conclusion from the above study would be to strengthen organizational linkages – addressing the horizontal and vertical disconnects at various levels – and enabling them to intersect.

At the government level, the institutional barriers within and across the ministries need to be addressed. This would require upgrading the architecture of the GSDS, as recommended in the peer review, and assuring that gender becomes a mainstream and cross-cutting issue for the Council on Sustainable Development, as well as for the parliamentary and state secretaries entities. It also needs an expansion of the classical remit of the Ministry of Family which entails an increase of human resources and expertise. One pragmatic opportunity is imminent: a new GSDS is to be developed by 2020, and Germany’s next presentation to the HLPF is foreseen for 2021. Reflections for both processes have begun and could be used for a systematic interaction with the 2030 Agenda and the gender equality remit of SDG 5. A simple remedy could be to ensure the inclusion of gender expertise and advocacy in these two processes. Cross-connections could be made to the CEDAW process with its specific recommendations.

In civil society, a more proactive engagement of individual actors and concerted action of CSOs could build on and deepen some of the initiatives mentioned above. The CSOs devoted to gender equality, notably the Women’s Council, UN Women National Committee Germany and NGOs allied around the CEDAW

process, would need to strategically interact with and influence CSOs active in other fields. They could demonstrate that gender equality is a prerequisite for all 2030 Agenda concerns. In turn, traditional sustainability actors ought to take it upon themselves to explain more fully the transformative remit of the 2030 Agenda – and how this could benefit especially a domestic feminist agenda that takes intersectionality seriously.

At a more overarching political level, international climate policy debates could function as a bridge and a springboard. As we have illustrated above, gender plays an increasingly visible role in international climate policy and Germany’s engagement here is traditionally strong. Garnering support from those political parties which have committed to promote gender and sustainable development issues could be helpful. The proposal of the Peer Review to insert a commitment to sustainability into the German Constitution could catalyse such discussions.

In this vein, policy entrepreneurs could be encouraged to coalesce across the spectrum of aspirations. One of the revelations of our interviews was the invisible role that a few policy entrepreneurs had played, for example in pushing for the GSDS.²²⁰

The percolation and localization of the gender remit needs a concurrent commitment linked to political, social, economic and ecological aspirations of the 2030 Agenda. The vision of gender equality needs to resonate with all actors supporting sustainable development. This could support women’s struggles in addressing Germany’s structural gender disadvantages.

220 In our interviews and conversations, the same names kept cropping up of experts who had shaped the discourse behind the scenes.

ANNEX: LIST OF PERSONS INTERVIEWED

We interviewed a total of 28 persons from 26 institutions. Below, we provide details on all the institutions and their representatives.

Ministries

Brief description	Position of the Interviewee
<p>Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend (BMFSFJ))</p> <p>The Federal Ministry for Family Affairs is responsible for family support (maintenance advance, maternity leave, parental allowance, child benefit) and ensures that family interests are taken into account within the Federal Government as well as equality issues. Furthermore, it makes policy for senior citizens and youth, and it supervises legislation concerning the federal volunteer service.</p>	Government official
<p>Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung (BMZ))</p> <p>Conceptualizing the development assistance of the Federal Republic of Germany (that promotes the implementation of democratic principles and human rights among other things in partner countries) is the main responsibility of the BMZ.</p> <p>Based on these principles, bilateral treaties with partner countries are agreed. The treaties include goals and measures whose results are controlled by the ministry.</p>	Government official
<p>Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (Bundesministerium für Umwelt, Naturschutz und nukleare Sicherheit (BMUB))</p> <p>The ministry works to protect citizens from environmental toxins and radiation, for a smart and spare use of raw materials, for climate protection and for a use of natural resources that ensures the diversity of animal and plant species and the preservation of their habitats.</p> <p>One main task is the preparation of statutory rules to create the regulatory framework for the policy fields mentioned above, including the transposition of EU directives into national law.</p>	Government official
<p>Federal Chancellery (Bundeskanzleramt)</p> <p>The Federal Chancellery is serving the executive office of the Chancellor of Germany. Main tasks are to provide necessary information for the work of the chancellor and to ensure coordination and coherence among the Federal Ministries. They work closely together with the Federal Ministries that possess department-specific information.</p>	Government official
<p>Federal Foreign Office (Auswärtiges Amt (AA))</p> <p>The Federal Foreign Office is the foreign ministry of Germany. With a network of around 230 missions abroad, the Federal Foreign Office maintains Germany's relations with other countries as well as with international and supra-national organizations. Moreover, it promotes international exchange and offers protection and assistance to Germans abroad.</p>	Government official
<p>German Environment Agency (Umweltbundesamt (UBA))</p> <p>As Germany's main environmental protection agency, the German Environment Agency ensures that the citizens have a healthy environment with clean air and water, free of pollutants. Their work centres around gathering data concerning the state of the environment, investigating relevant interrelationships and making projections. Based on this, they provide the federal bodies with policy advice and the general public with information.</p>	Public servant

Autonomous, government-funded institutions

Brief description	Position of the Interviewee
<p>German Council for Sustainable Development (Rat für Nachhaltige Entwicklung (RNE)) The Council advises the German Government on its sustainable development policy, seeks to advance the Sustainability Strategy as well as propose projects for its realization. A further task is to foster social dialogue on the issue of sustainability to increase awareness among the population.</p>	Project Manager
<p>Regional Network on Sustainability (Regionale Netzstellen Nachhaltigkeit – under RNE – RENN) The RENN network links players from a wide variety of societal areas to help ensure sustainable development at regional level becomes everyday practice. The German Council for Sustainable Development (RNE) has selected four hubs that are being supported by the Federal Government for a period of five years.</p>	Project Manager

Networks, Umbrella Organizations, Foundations

Brief description	Position of the Interviewee
<p>National Council of German Women’s Organizations (Deutscher Frauenrat) The Council is an umbrella organization of 60 nationwide women’s associations and organizations. It is the biggest women’s lobby organization in Germany. The Council represents professional and religious associations, women’s groups from political parties, trade unions and the German sports federation, as well as other organizations with a diverse array of social and political objectives. The council campaigns for the rights of women in Germany, the EU and at the UN. The goal is to achieve legal and de facto equality of women and men in all areas of life.</p>	NGO representative
<p>German Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN Germany) The objective of the SDSN is the mobilization of scientific and technical expertise from academia, civil society and the corporate sector to assist in finding solutions regarding sustainable development at a local, national and global level. SDSN cooperates closely with facilities of the UN, the financial world, the corporate sector and civil society.</p>	NGO representative
<p>Deutsche Stiftung Weltbevölkerung (DSW) Deutsche Stiftung Weltbevölkerung (DSW) is a global development organization that focuses on the needs and potential of the largest youth generation in history. We are committed to creating demand for and access to health information, services, supplies and economic empowerment for youth. We achieve this by engaging in advocacy, capacity development and reproductive health initiatives, so that young people are empowered to lead healthy and self-determined lives. With our headquarters in Hannover, Germany, DSW operates two liaison offices in Berlin and Brussels, as well as maintaining a strong presence in Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. For more information, please see: www.dsw.org.</p>	NGO representative
<p>Women Engage for a Common Future (WECF) International Women Engage for a Common Future was officially registered as a foundation in 1994 following the “Earth Summit” in Rio (1992) with the aim to give women a strong voice in the fields of sustainable development and environmental policy. The objective of the organization is to bring environmental, health and economic aspects into balance. Today, WECF depicts a network of more than 150 women and environment organizations in 50 countries worldwide.</p>	NGO representative

NGOs

Brief description	Position of the Interviewee
<p>Global Policy Forum (GPF)</p> <p>The Global Policy Forum is an international NGO that works as a policy watchdog following and analysing the work of the UN critically and creating transparency by informing the public. The main office of the 1993-founded GPF is situated at UN headquarters in New York. It has released numerous publications about topics like tax reform, the UN Security Council, the UN World Food Programme/ hunger crisis and the problems of development aid.</p> <p>The most important medium of the Forum's public relations work is its homepage. It also publishes scientific studies and hosts conferences at irregular intervals.</p>	NGO representative
<p>Munich Sustainability Initiative (Münchner Initiative Nachhaltigkeit (MIN))</p> <p>The Munich Sustainability Initiative is an association of civil society organizations that campaign for sustainability – both for specific topics and across strategic questions in Munich.</p>	NGO representative
<p>German NGO Forum on Environment and Development (Forum Umwelt und Entwicklung)</p> <p>The German NGO Forum on Environment and Development was founded in 1992 after the UN conference on Environment and Development ("Rio Conference"). Its mission is to coordinate German CSOs in international processes on sustainable development and to raise awareness on the interlinkages between environment and development.</p>	NGO representative
<p>Marie-Schlei-Association (Marie-Schlei-Verein e.V.)</p> <p>The Marie-Schlei-Association was founded in 1984 in remembrance of the former minister of economic cooperation Marie Schlei. The association informs about the situation of women in Africa, Asia and Latin America and establishes partnerships with local women groups and organizations. One of its aims is to promote educational projects for women to improve their living conditions.</p>	NGO representative
<p>BUND Friends of the Earth Germany (Bund für Umwelt und Naturschutz Deutschland e.V.)</p> <p>BUND is one of the biggest independent environmental associations in Germany and counts more than 2,000 voluntary groups throughout the country. Its goal is the protection of nature and the environment. BUND campaigns for organic farming, healthy food, climate protection, renewable energies and the protection of endangered species, forests and water.</p>	NGO representative
<p>genanet and Gender CC</p> <p>genanet was founded as a project of the association "LIFE- education, environment, equal opportunity". The idea: to build structures for networking and professional groups to generate expert knowledge and influence environment policy. genanet develops positions and policy papers on environmental and sustainability policies from a gender perspective. It facilitates discussions on strategies for their implementation and builds structures to effectively influence political decisions.</p> <p>genanet also participates in research projects conducted under the roof of Gender CC.</p> <p>Gender CC (Women for Climate Justice e.V.) is a network consisting of organizations, experts and activists from all over the world allied to fight for gender-inclusive climate policy. Other aspects of their work include raising awareness for the relations between gender ratio and climate change, doing research and networking.</p>	NGO representative

UN-related NGOs

Brief description	Position of the Interviewee
<p>UN Women National Committee Germany (UN Women Nationales Komitee Deutschland e.V.)</p> <p>The objective of the UN Women National Committee Germany is to promote UN Women in Germany and to raise funds for their work. The Committee is an independent NGO that links global and national topics related to gender equality and became a strategic partner of the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth.</p>	<p>Bettina Metz, Executive Director Karin Nordmeyer, Chairwoman</p>
<p>United Nations Association of Germany (Deutsche Gesellschaft für die Vereinten Nationen e.V.)</p> <p>The United Nations Association of Germany is the contact point for all who are interested in the UN. They provide information about essential developments and outcomes of the work of the UN as well as their specialized agencies. UNA-Germany conveys the concerns of the UN to the public. It preferentially deals with German UN policy and practices political consulting. UNA-Germany is independent and works above party lines.</p>	<p>Detlef Dzembitzki, Chairperson</p>

Think Tanks

Brief description	Position of the Interviewee
<p>German Development Institute (Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik (DIE))</p> <p>The German Development Institute based in UN City Bonn is one of the worldwide leading think tanks and research facilities regarding global development and international cooperation. The Institute develops policy relevant concepts, consults ministries, governments and international organizations and takes a stand on current political topics.</p> <p>The training programmes of the institute, the Post-Graduate Programme as well as the Programme on Managing Global Governance, address graduates and future leaders.</p>	<p>Senior Researcher</p>
<p>German Institute for International and Security Affairs (Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (SWP))</p> <p>The German Institute for International and Security Affairs advises political decision-makers (for example the German Government, the Bundestag, the European Union, NATO and the United Nations) on international politics and foreign and security policy. The independent Institute conducts academic research with its own priorities and without preconceived outcomes. Moreover, the team of 50 researchers brings together diverse perspectives.</p>	<p>Senior Researcher</p>

Experts in their personal capacity/Academia

Brief description	Position of the Interviewee
<p>The 2018 International Peer Review on the German Sustainability Strategy (Peer Review 2018 zur Deutschen Nachhaltigkeitsstrategie) focused on Germany’s approach to sustainable development. Members of the International Peer Review Group were given the opportunity to meet and discuss the Sustainable Development Strategy with high-level politicians, State representatives, stakeholders and actors and benefited from written statements and position papers requested during consultations on the Strategy.</p>	<p>Rt. Hon. Helen Clark Chair of the International Peer Group (Former Prime Minister of New Zealand and former UNDP Administrator)</p>
<p>Eva Quistorp is co-founder and activist of the German peace, women and environmental movement. The evangelic theologian and political scientist is founding member of the Green Party and former member of the European Parliament.</p>	<p>NGO representative</p>
<p>Regina Frey is a political scientist who founded the “genderoffice” in Berlin. She consults organizations regarding gender equality strategies and monitors projects and programmes that focus on gender.</p>	<p>Coordinator of the Second Gender Equality Report of the German Government</p>

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