Key Components of Governance for Sustainable Development and SDG Implementation in Sweden

Laura Wahlandt Selhag
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LAURA WAHLANDT SELHAG


Abstract: The aim of this qualitative interpretive study is to look into SDG implementation in Sweden from a governance for sustainable development perspective. This research is to be seen as a first attempt at mapping the state of governance for sustainable development in relation to SDG implementation in Sweden – further research is both necessary and welcomed in order to get a complete picture of the situation. Seven key components of governance for sustainable development developed by Gibson et al. (2005) are used as a theoretical framework for the study. Those key components are: policy integration; shared sustainability objectives; sustainability based criteria for planning and approval of significant undertakings; specified rules for managing trade-offs and compromises; widely accepted indicators of needs for action and progress towards sustainability; information and incentives for practical implementation, and; programmes for system innovation. Previous research as well as reports from organizations such as the OECD and the European Commission have been used to evaluate the state of these components in Sweden, primarily from an environmental sustainability perspective. Conclusions reached include that the main components relevant for Swedish implementation of the SDGs are: policy integration, shared sustainability objectives and widely accepted indicators for needs for action and progress towards sustainable development. Another conclusion drawn is that the level of fulfillment in some of these key components does not necessarily correspond with the likelihood of successful SDG implementation. Further research is being suggested for a governance-related mapping of the social and economic pillars of sustainable development. Together with the environmental pillar they are essential for the holistic approach that sustainable development deserves.

Keywords: Sustainable Development, Governance for Sustainable Development, Agenda 2030, Sustainable Development Goals, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) implementation

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Summary: In September 2015 the international community committed to 17 new global goals. These goals were to take the place of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and were labeled Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDGs are global in scope and incorporate in an integrated way all three pillars of sustainable development – social, environmental, and economic. Because they are global in scope they put unique requirements on the developed nations of the world that previously rarely had to actively change behavior and ways of conduct to incorporate this type of global agendas. Sweden is of course part of countries that are now facing this new challenge. This paper aims at looking at Swedish adaptation of the SDGs into a national context from the perspective of governance for sustainable development. The theoretical framework used in this paper, developed by Bibson, Kemp and Parto (2005) argues for seven key components of governance for sustainable development for sustainable development to be attainable. The key components are; policy integration; shared sustainability objectives; sustainability based criteria for planning and approval of significant undertakings; specified rules for managing trade-offs and compromises; widely accepted indicators of needs for action and progress towards sustainability; information and incentives for practical implementation, and; programmes for system innovation. Using these key components as a basis for the research, previous research and official reports from organizations such as OECD and the EU are used to paint a picture of the state of governance for sustainable development in Sweden, primarily when it comes to the environmental aspect of sustainable development. The research questions that are looked at in this research has to do with arguing which key components of governance for sustainable development are most important for SDG implementation in Sweden. The conclusion reached is that policy integration, shared sustainability objectives; sustainability based criteria for planning and approval of significant undertakings, and shared sustainability objectives are the most important key components relevant for SDG implementation in Sweden.

Keywords: Sustainable Development, Governance for Sustainable Development, Agenda 2030, Sustainable Development Goals, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) implementation

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1. Introduction

After the conclusion of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were created. They pose a new challenge for many of the 193 nations that are members of the United Nations, as many of them have not had to adapt to a global agenda of this scale before. The MDGs were in many ways only concerned with developing countries and how to help them develop out of poverty. This time around however the purpose of the SDGs is for them to be universally applicable. This means that the SDGs requires all States, Sweden included, to adapt their systems and ways of conduct if the international community as a whole is to have a chance of fulfilling the ambitions they have set out for themselves. The purpose of this paper is to explore what challenges there might be to SDG implementation in Sweden form a governance for sustainable development perspective.

Sustainable development has been on the agenda for the United Nations for many years now. The Stockholm conference on the Human Environment was held in 1972, and in 1987 what unofficially has been called the Brundtland report came out where the term sustainable development as a concept was defined as “Development that meets the needs of current generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (World Commission for Environment and Development WCED, 1987 p. 45), a definition that still stands strong within the UN system. Since then, sustainable development has been a topic that has increasingly concerned the international community, but maybe never more so then right now. With the end of the Millennium Development Goals in 2015 and their both successes and failures it was realized that development without properly taking into consideration all three pillars of sustainable development - the social, the environmental and the economic - development cannot be expected to last, and maybe even more - not be expected to not also bring with it some negative consequences.

The MDGs were in many respects a success, which is something that should not be diminished, it remains true however that the environment suffered because insufficient understanding of the interconnectedness between social and economic development and environmental degradation. Ban Ki-moon reflects in his foreword to the 2015 report for the MDGs that more needs to be done to integrate the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development and he says that the process of developing the SDGs were part of that mandate (United Nations, 2015). With the end of the MDGs the international community realized that there was a chance to bring together all the lessons drawn from the success of the MDGs, but also to learn from the mistakes made. Environmental degradation is ever more visible, and the amount of so called climate refugees are anticipated to only grow bigger and bigger unless the international community does something to change the trajectory. Around 22.5 million people have been displaced by weather and climate change related causes each year for the last seven years, which is equivalent of 62 000 people every day (IPDMC, 2015). Small Island Developing States (SIDS) are in danger of more or less being swallowed up by the ocean and the occurrence of more and more devastating storms in all corners of the world seems to only be increasing. Not to mention that 2015 was the warmest year on record globally (Carrington, 2016). The time when the international community must start thinking about development in a more holistic and inclusive way is now, they cannot afford to wait any longer.
The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is a complicated, interconnected web of goals and targets, which in itself of course pose a number of challenges. For one, adapting the SDGs to a national context where the policy areas are lacking in such interconnectedness and there is no natural collaboration between different sectors of society will be a huge challenge to overcome. Keeping a holistic viewpoint where all potential aspects and effects of an action is taken into consideration is naturally very difficult, and changing structures so that they take into consideration not only the social aspects of a social reform, but also the environmental and the economic in tandem, will be difficult and require a lot of collaboration between sectors that up till this point perhaps have had very little connections between them.

As stated above the 2030 Agenda is a universal one, which means that for the first time Sweden will have to adapt their development policies and structures to fit with the SDGs in an attempt to achieve the goals that Sweden, together with 192 other countries have decided upon. Sweden is one of a few developed countries that routinely have scored very high when it comes to preparedness for adapting to the SDGs. For example, the Bertelsmann Stiftung has conducted a stress test to see how well rich countries are prepared for the SDGs, where Sweden, together with Norway, Denmark Finland and Switzerland, are the highest scoring countries. It is said that these countries are in a good position to foster further improvements when it comes to sustainable development (Kroll, 2015). The Sustainable Development Solutions Network has finished a preliminary SDG index and dashboard, where again Sweden is ranked as number one. This is of course very encouraging, however, it is not to say that adapting to the SDGs will not pose a big challenge in Sweden. For one, this is something that Sweden has not had to do before, since the MDGs were focused on developing nations – taking on a new endeavor is bound to be difficult, and it would be naïve to think it will be possible without any hiccups, no matter how well prepared or on the way Sweden is already. Sweden might rank high in comparison to other countries in terms of adapting to the SDGs, but that is not the same as saying that Sweden has an easy task ahead.

Governance in essence has to do with how society is a collective construct, and it is thus an important theoretical concept in this context. Traditionally it is easy to think of the government as the only actor involved in setting agendas and rules, and the state is of course the main actor in many of these instances. However, without the cooperation of civil society and the market, which traditionally has been seen as two of the other major actors in governance (Zeijl-Rozema van, et al., 2008), effective governing cannot take place. This means that for effective SDG implementation in Sweden to happen, effective governance for sustainable development is a prerequisite. Governance is however not uncomplicated, and there are many components that go into effective governance. There can be said to be some key components of governance for sustainable development, for the sake of this research the key components as specified by Gibson et al. (2005) will be used. The key components are:

- Policy integration
- Shared sustainability objectives
- Sustainability based criteria for planning and approval of significant undertakings
- Specified rules for managing trade-offs and compromises
- Widely accepted indicators of needs for action and progress towards sustainability
- Information and incentives for practical implementation
- Programmes for system innovation
By reviewing the components that are important in governance for sustainable development, and investigating the state at which these are fulfilled in Sweden today mainly focusing on the environmental aspect of sustainable development it is possible to get an idea of how difficult or not it might be for Sweden to adapt the SDGs to their national context. It should be noted also that for the sake of this research the key component ‘sustainability based criteria for planning and approval of significant undertakings’ and ‘specified rules for managing trade-offs and compromises’ will be looked at together, as the borders between the two are very blurry.

The method used in this research is an interpretive qualitative research method primarily based on a literature and document review. Secondary sources have primarily been used in the form of previous research or reports by OECD, for example. Results from the review have been used to draw conclusions regarding how key components of governance for sustainable development is realized in Sweden. The reason behind the use of this method is the complexities of the issues that are being looked at. Rather than looking at one key component of governance for sustainable development in depth, the choice was made to look at all key components to get a more holistic picture of the situation and thus also the opportunity to get an insight to what challenges there might be to SDG implementation in Sweden. Given this reasoning and the limited scope and time frame of this research the use of secondary sources was necessary as it was not feasible to conduct quantitative research in the form of interviews or in depth content analysis on documents for all key components, which would have been necessary.

1.1 Purpose

The purpose of this thesis is to, through a governance for sustainable development perspective, investigate what challenges there might be for Sweden to effectively incorporate the SDGs to a national context. The idea is that by looking at the state of the fulfillment of key components of governance for sustainable development when it comes to primarily environmental aspects of sustainable development, an idea of the nature of the main challenges regarding implementation that Sweden face can be discerned. The hope is that by the end of the process suggestions for possible future directions regarding further research and governance related initiatives can be presented.

1.1.1 Research questions

Given the purpose stated above the research questions are as follows:

- What key components of governance for sustainable development are likely to be important to consider for Sweden’s implementation of the SDGs?
- What key components of governance for sustainable development can be seen as posing challenges to Swedish implementation of the SDGs?
- What are possible directions for further research and governance related initiatives that Sweden can take in an attempt to overcome these challenges?

1.2 Delimitations

Here the limits of the research are acknowledged. The choices made in terms of the scope of the research are also discussed. There are primarily three things worthy of discussion, first why governance for sustainable development was chosen as the theoretical framework, second, the reasoning behind focusing on all key components of governance for sustainable development, and third, the focus on the environmental aspect of sustainable development.
The theoretical framework of governance for sustainable development was chosen because governance incorporates many aspects of what the challenges with sustainable development really are, not only when it comes to SDG implementation. It can be argued that getting a sense of the general state of the governance structures in Sweden can be a good indicator of where Sweden might be facing challenges in terms of adapting to the SDGs. That being said, it should also be acknowledged that there might be many more challenges to SDG implementation than what can be covered by looking at the situation through the perspective of governance for sustainable development. An example of a challenge that has little to do with governance as such is unexpected occurrences such as a potential financial crisis, or, one could even argue, that the increase of refugees and immigrants in Sweden will pose a challenge in the sense that it moves focus from sustainable development as an interconnected issue, to one where focus is only put on one thing at the time, arguably because of necessity when unexpected and extraordinary things occur. Having a strong governance for sustainable development system in place might help tackle these occurrences more effectively, however the challenges are still there.

The choice to focus on all key components of governance for sustainable development instead of deeper on one or two components can of course also be criticized. However, given that the focus of the thesis is to look into possible challenges to SDG implementation in Sweden from a governance for sustainable development perspective, only looking at one or two key components would be insufficient. In order to paint a broad picture, you have to look at all key components in Sweden and to what degree they are fulfilled. The argument can be made that because of the many key components of governance for sustainable development, only a more wide-ranging investigation can be made, especially because the information being relied on is primarily secondary sources such as previous research and reports. This could potentially bring into question the legitimacy of the research. While a valid point, it is also important to acknowledge that this thesis is a first mapping of the situation in Sweden when it comes to governance for sustainable development and readiness to adapt to the SDGs. A so called more wide-ranging first mapping of this kind can serve as a great way of identifying where more focus should be put, and where more research will be needed. The aim is not to come with any clear cut suggestions or answers, rather it is to come to a conclusion that indicates where more work needs to be done. A lot has been written previously on these topics, and it is arguably beneficial to build on this research as much as possible, and draw new conclusions from them. Because of this it is possible to argue for the validity of this project. The aim is not to primarily look into the specifics of how well these key components are fulfilled in Sweden, its rather to discuss how the state of these key components can affect the successful implementation of the SDGs in Sweden and what potential actions Sweden might take.

There is a focus on the environmental aspect of sustainable development in this paper. Ideally there should be a focus on all aspects of sustainable development for this type of evaluation to hold proper relevance. As it stands now however, this is only a first mapping attempt at research that will require much more time and resources to be complete. Traces of the other two pillars of sustainable development are detectable however, as they naturally are intimately interconnected to each other. The focus on the environmental aspect of sustainable development is mainly due to the accessibility of documents and information. Sweden has a long history of being concerned with environmental sustainability, and because of this the availability of relevant documentation in this areas is greater. Further research that is needed in combination with this is naturally the equivalent of this with a greater focus on the economic or social
dimension, or for that matter a more holistic approach where the interconnectedness between the three is investigated more thoroughly.

1.3 Disposition

The structure of this research paper is as follows:

After the introductory chapter background information relevant to the research topic is given. This includes among other a more through introduction to the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs as well as a description of the situation for sustainable development in Sweden. After the background chapter the theoretical framework is developed, where focus is put on the concept of governance for sustainable development. The key components of governance for sustainable development are discussed, as they are the foundation of the research conducted. Chapter four covers the methods used to conduct the research as well as how the key components of governance for sustainable development has been operationalized in relation to the research and the Swedish context. The fifth chapter covers the results of the main research question, namely the state of governance for sustainable development in Sweden based on the key components elaborated on in the theoretical framework chapter. The results are divided along the lines of the key components of governance for sustainable development, which is each given its own sub-chapter. The results chapter is followed by the discussion chapter which comes in two parts, first a discussion on how the key components of governance for sustainable development can be related to the SDGs, and what challenges Sweden might be facing with implementing the SDGs if they are taken into consideration. The second part discuss possible directions for further research and governance related initiatives that Sweden can take in an attempt to overcome the challenges identified. Lastly, the final chapter is a summarization and conclusion of the research conducted.
2. Background

2.1 SDGs

25th-27th September 2015 Member States of the United Nations gathered in New York and adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The goals and the Agenda can be found in the outcome document “70/1. Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”. It includes 17 goals and 169 targets that together form the basis for how the international community is intending to reach sustainable development by 2030. The idea of sustainable development that is expressed in the 2030 Agenda is one where it is understood to entail three dimensions that are interconnected; social, economic, and environmental. The understanding is that to reach true sustainable development all three dimensions must be respected and focused on simultaneously in a balanced way (General Assembly resolution 70/1., 2015). Further, the Agenda is a universal one, meaning that it applies to all nations equally. Below the SDGs are listed (for specific targets see General Assembly resolution 70/1., 2015)

Sustainable Development Goals

Goal 1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere

Goal 2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture

Goal 3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages

Goal 4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all

Goal 5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

Goal 6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all

Goal 7. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all

Goal 8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all

Goal 9. Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation

Goal 10. Reduce inequality within and among countries

Goal 11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

Goal 12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns

Goal 13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts

Goal 14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development

Goal 15. Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss
Goal 16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels

Goal 17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development

(General Assembly resolution 70/1., 2015)

2.1.1 SDG interconnectedness

The SDGs are interconnected to each other in a complicated pattern both in wording and formulation, as well as through a more pragmatic perspective. This interconnectedness is important to keep in mind when working to adapt the SDGs to a national or regional level. Any policies and changes that are done should take the interconnectedness of the SDGs into consideration, if successful integrating of the SDGs in national contexts is what is desired. In essence, it can be argued that any policy integration that Sweden strives for should be based on the interconnectedness of the SDGs if the implementation of the framework is to be successful. Because of this, it is important to understand how the SDGs are interconnected when looking at governance for sustainable development in Sweden with the aim of assessing SDG implementation.

The interconnectedness of the goals and targets is a carefully thought out strategy that aims at addressing issues with lack of integration across sectors when it comes to policies, strategies, and implementation. David Le Blanc has created a mapping of the SDGs that shows how the different targets and goals are linked to each other. The idea that he puts forward is that the mapping can be seen as a “‘political mapping’ of the sustainable development universe, as opposed to, for example, a mapping purely based on natural and social science insights about how the system works (Le Blanc, 2015a, p. 177)”.

Figure 1: The SDGs as a network of targets

Source: Le Blanc, 2015a, p. 179
The figure above is an illustration of how the targets of each of the goals (excluding goal 17) are connected to each other, in language alone. The bug circles are the goals, and the small circles are the more specified targets. Looking at the mapping and its interconnectedness it is clear that at the heart of the SDGs are inequality, sustainable consumption and production, hunger, and education. The goals that are most closely linked to each other are goals 4 and 5 (gender and education) and goals 1 and 10 (poverty and inequality) (Le Blanc, 2015a).

Le Blanc argues in his report on SDG interconnectedness that the SDGs might function as an enabler for integration, and that internationally agreed upon goals and targets like these ones have both instrumental and political value. The goals and targets become a common benchmark against which institutions that are tasked with working for and with the Agenda can evaluate their actions. The goals create a basis for cooperation and accountability among nations to achieve sustainable development in the form of this shared vision. Le Blanc draws the conclusion that the structure of the SDGs will have implications for policy integration. Because of the clear interconnectedness of the targets institutions that are concerned with working on only one of the targets will ultimately be forced to take into account targets that refer to other goals as well. This in itself may provide incentives for cross-sectoral integrated work, not to mention that if you are interested in monitoring and evaluating the progress of the Agenda itself, a holistic and multi-sectoral view-point is absolutely necessary. (Le Blanc, 2015a, p. 182). It is clear then that for the SDGs to be successful policy integrations is necessary on a national level, especially if the aim is to make the process of reaching sustainable development as effective as possible.

The goals and targets might be interconnected in wording, however, in scientific terms there are a lot more interconnectedness between the three dimensions of sustainable development than is expressed in the 2030 Agenda. The graph below illustrates the scientific interconnectedness between the goals as a contrast to the previous graph which only focuses on explicit interconnectedness in wording. The graph is made by Le Blanc, but based on research conducted by the International Council for Science (ICSU) and the International Social Science Council (ISSC) that can be found in the document entitled Review of Targets for the Sustainable Development Goals: The Science Perspective.

Figure 2: Scientific links between the SDGs
Le Blanc discusses the findings in the ICSU & ISSC paper and highlights areas where the difference is greater between the scientific interconnectedness and the interconnectedness of the goals and targets in the Agenda. The main point he makes is that interconnections between the environmental aspects of sustainable development is much less clear in the Agenda than they are “in real life”. He admits that the SDGs do not provide a reliable framework for illustrating all interconnectedness among targets. The areas where interconnections are not made clear in the SDGs will be important to keep a close eye on when it comes to reviewing the Sustainable Development Agenda in the future (Le Blanc, 2015a). Having this awareness of where there are gaps can be argued to be crucial for a realization of sustainable development that goes beyond the SDG framework. It is not however to say that the SDGs lacks value. It is important to remember the political nature of the 2030 Agenda, and that it is because of this political nature that the SDGs are formulated the way they are. Had the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda been more in line with the evaluation from the ICSU and the ISSC the likelihood of success would most likely have decreased due to a lack in political commitments. Work on policy integration in the lines of the SDGs will be important for success, however, it might also be important to keep the even more interconnected nature of sustainable development in mind when creating new institutions and structures for addressing policy integration concerns. After all, the point of policy integration is not primarily to match the SDGs, rather it is an understanding of the interconnectedness of the system, and that we need to create systems and institutions that understand this interconnectedness and who work with it rather than against it.

2.1.2 Governance in the SDGs

As governance for sustainable development is the focus of this paper it is of relevance to explore how governance is reflected in the SDGs themselves. Understanding how governance is covered in the agenda can have implications for how governance for sustainable development can and should be addressed in Sweden when adapting the SDG framework to a Swedish context.

Governance is reflected in goal 16: “Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels (General Assembly resolution 70/1., 2015)”. Goal 16 is innovative in many different ways, one of which is the way it restates good governance as one of the central aspirational goals of the UN system as a whole, and as such it will have implications for how institutions within the UN system will be reformed (Edwards & Romero, 2014). Below goal 16 and its targets are listed.

Goal 16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels

16.1 Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere

16.2 End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children

16.3 Promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all
16.4 By 2030, significantly reduce illicit financial and arms flows, strengthen the recovery and return of stolen assets and combat all forms of organized crime
16.5 Substantially reduce corruption and bribery in all their forms
16.6 Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels
16.7 Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels
16.8 Broaden and strengthen the participation of developing countries in the institutions of global governance
16.9 By 2030, provide legal identity for all, including birth registration
16.10 Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements
16.a Strengthen relevant national institutions, including through international cooperation, for building capacity at all levels, in particular in developing countries, to prevent violence and combat terrorism and crime
16.b Promote and enforce non-discriminatory laws and policies for sustainable development

(General Assembly resolution 70/1., 2015)

The first time governance is addressed is while detailing the international communities’ vision for the word, where it says: “One in which democracy, good governance and the rule of law, as well as an enabling environment at the national and international levels, are essential for sustainable development, including sustained and inclusive economic growth, social development, environmental protection and the eradication of poverty and hunger (General Assembly resolution 70/1., 2015, p. 4)”.

It is also acknowledged in the Agenda that sustainable development is dependent on good governance and factors that might give rise to poor governance is addressed. Further it is highlighted that “We recommit to broadening and strengthening the voice and participation of developing countries – including African countries, least developed countries, landlocked developing countries, small island developing States and middle-income countries – in international economic decision-making, norm-setting and global economic governance (General Assembly resolution 70/1., 2015, p. 11)”.

It is pointed out that cohesive nationally owned strategies for sustainable development that are supported by national financing frameworks will be at the heart of the international communities’ efforts. Meaning that ownership of the realization and implementation of the SDGs will fall to the Member States respectively. However, it is also pointed out that individual national efforts must be supported by an enabling international economic environment which includes strengthened and enhanced global economic governance (General Assembly resolution 70/1., 2015, p. 35).

The examples above are all the instances where governance is explicitly mentioned in the document outside of goal 16. It is interesting to note the focus on global economic governance, as opposed to other forms of global governance, for instance global environmental governance.
2.1.3 SDG indicators

Indicators are necessary as a tool for evaluating progress and for implementation of the SDGs to be successful. There are many different sets of indicators for different purposes that can all be said to relate to sustainable development all over the world. The SDGs do not technically come with a set of indicators, however there are indicators being developed. Indicators for assessing progress will be crucial for implementing the SDGs in Sweden, partly because of the reporting that Sweden will be required to contribute to, based on the indicators developed by the United Nations (United Nations Social and Economic Council, 2016).

In March of 2015 the United Nations Statistical Commission created the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators (IAEG-SDGs). It is composed of UN Member States and it has regional and international agencies as observers. The IAEG-SDGs provided a proposal for a global indicator framework for consideration by the Statistical Commission at its 47th session in March of 2016 (UNSTATS, 2016). Given the timing of the writing of this paper, this is as far as the process has come. That being said, the proposal is unlikely to be changed much at this point, and looking closer at the proposal will give a good indication of how the work towards the realization of the SDGs might look at a more practical level.

The indicators that the IAEG-SDGs has developed are global in scope, however Member States have agreed that they will be complemented by indicators on national and regional levels which will be developed by Member States themselves. The national indicators are to be developed in line with the global commitment states have signed up for when agreeing on the 2030 Agenda. This means that targets are set based on their global level of ambition in mind while at the same time taking into consideration national realities (United Nations Social and Economic Council, 2016).

The indicator framework aims at being simple and robust while still addressing all 17 sustainable development goals and targets, as well as preserving the political balance, integration and ambition that can be found in the 2030 Agenda. Some of the targets are as of yet lacking in baseline data, and it is acknowledged that much work will have to be done in this regard. Additionally, the framework in itself will out of necessity be part of a process where there is possibility for refinement of targets as both data availability and knowledge improve (United Nations Social and Economic Council, 2016).

A further discussion and exploration on the specifics of the indicators are beyond the scope of this paper, but a general understanding of where the international community is in regard to this process will be beneficial later when it comes to discussing SDG implementation in Sweden.

2.2 Sustainable Development in Sweden

In order to be able to assess the governance for sustainable development situation in Sweden today an understanding of where Sweden is when it comes to sustainable development is necessary. Sweden is often regarded as one of the leading countries in the world in regard to sustainable development, both in commitment and achievement. However, that is not to say that Sweden is a sustainable society and that no more work is needed. The following section highlight some instances where Sweden is both succeeding and lacking in their work towards sustainable development. Arguably, giving a rough description of the situation in Sweden will give an indication of what Sweden has left to do.
In general, when it comes to readiness reports for SDG implementation, Sweden is scoring very high, as mentioned in the introduction of this paper. For example, in the paper by Cristian Kroll entitled “Sustainable Development Goals: Are the rich countries ready?” Sweden is ranked on top of all 34 OECD countries that was looked at (Kroll, 2015). Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI) also conducted an evaluation of Sweden’s readiness to SDG implementation. What they found was that 81 of the 107 targets set up by the international community (goal 17 was not included in the evaluation) will need work if Sweden are to achieve them by 2030. Some other conclusions that were drawn in the paper done by Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI) is that for a meaningful national implementation plan to be successful an inclusive and government-led process to interpret the SDGs in a Swedish context is necessary, and that up till the writing of the paper, the complexity of this process seemed to have been underestimated in Sweden (Weitz, Persson, Nilsson, & Tenggren, 2015).

In 2004 the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) conducted a case study that investigated sustainable development in Sweden. The case study acknowledged and highlighted Sweden’s commitment to sustainable development both nationally and internationally. The case study highlighted how Swedish sustainable development work often is emphasized on the environmental aspect of sustainable development, and gives the 1972 conference as an example of this. The sustainable development strategy that Sweden had at the time of the writing of the report is said to be only one step in a long list of sustainability initiatives. The strategy was created around three different key principles; sustainable development can only be achieved in Sweden through cooperation in both global and regional contexts; sustainable development policies and measures must be integrated into all policy areas, and; further action at national level will be needed (IISD, 2004).

The latest strategy for sustainable development was presented in 2004, and in 2005 an add-on was submitted that discussed strategic challenges (Regeringen, 2001; Regeringen, 2005). Since then there has been no new strategy submitted nor has these old strategies been amended to reflect new and changing challenges and circumstances.

The Swedish Statistics authority has previously put together statistics regarding sustainable development indicators. The latest compilation of statistics was made in 2006, and the latest report written in 2012 was based on Swedish status in relation to indicators established by the EU (SCB, 2016).

Sweden might not have continued its diligent work on an ambitious sustainable development strategy, but what Sweden does have is a very ambitious Environmental Quality Objectives Strategy, something that is recognized in the case study by IISD (IISD, 2004). The environmental quality strategy consists of three types of goals; the generational goal; environmental quality goals, and; milestones. The generational goal is said to be the guiding goal for all environmental work at all levels of society. It is there to guide which type of changes are needed for Sweden to be able to achieve the goal they have set up. The generational goal is focused on recovering ecosystems and preserving biodiversity as well as the natural and cultural environment, among other things. The environmental quality goals themselves are 16 different goals spanning many different areas, from air quality to the state of lakes, and functioning ecosystems in forests and in agricultural areas. For each of the goals there are also a number of definitions that guide what the goal is supposed to be aiming at. The milestones are there to make the work with achieving the generational goal and the environmental quality goal easier.
and more manageable within some prioritized areas (Naturvårdsverket, 2012). The National Sustainable Development Strategy that was first developed in 2004 was considered redundant because of this Environmental Quality Objectives Strategy, and was abandoned because of it (OECD, 2014).

The foregoing is not a complete description of sustainable development in Sweden, as that is far beyond the scope of this paper. However, the aim is to give an indication of what the situation concerning sustainable development is like in Sweden today. Generally, it is good, and Sweden consistently scores very high in terms of SDG preparedness and achievement level of the SDGs. What is interesting to note is the emphasis on the environmental aspect of sustainable development.

2.2.1 What is being done in preparation of the SDGs now

Considering that the SDGs have been on the agenda of the international community for many years, even before they were adopted in September 2015, one might argue that preparations for SDG implementation should have started and be well on their way. That being said, some initiatives on behalf of the Swedish government have now (in 2016) been initiated. It is naturally important to take these things into consideration when arguing for possible directions the Swedish government can take when it comes to SDG implementation from a governance for sustainable development perspective.

On the 7th of April 2016 the government decided that around 80 government agencies will map out and report on how they are contributing to Sweden’s abilities to reach the SDGs, and if there is need for more action in any areas for Sweden to be able to reach the goals and targets set out in the 2030 Agenda. Sweden’s ambition is to be leading in working with the SDGs, and it is acknowledged that to do this it is important to create commitment and functioning collaboration between those actors that will be effected. The government agencies are set to report on their conclusions and findings at the very latest in the end of August of 2016 (Regeringen, 2016a).

Further, on the 17th of March the government announced that they are establishing a committee that will work on Sweden’s work with the 2030 Agenda. Their mandate is to develop an overarching action plan for Sweden’s implementation of the Agenda as well as highlight some good examples in the area. The delegation is meant to play a vital role when Sweden starts working towards implementing the Agenda both domestically and globally. The delegation will submit a draft for a suggestion for Sweden’s action plan on the 1st of November 2016. The final action plan is to be completed by the 1st of March 2017 (Regeringen, 2016b).
3. Theoretical Framework: Governance for Sustainable Development

3.1 Governance and governance for sustainable development

Looking at SDG implementation through a governance perspective will give insights into the situation in Sweden in terms of preparedness to the task of SDG implementation. Governance theory can help with understanding processes in society, and what motivates them.

In order for sustainable development to be achieved, effective governance is a prerequisite. This is something that has been recognized in the goals themselves (goal 16). However, governance as a concept is not as straightforward as one might think, and many different, if similar definitions exist. For example, it can be defined as “the coordination and conciliation of interdependent activities via institutions (Frödin, 2015, p. 452)”. Institutions in this case is defined as “Socially devised structures with a high degree of resilience, which enable, constrain, and provide meaning to people’s actions (ibid.)”. In the case of looking at SDG implementation, governance theory can give insight to how structures present in society are likely to assist or hinder SDG implementation. In other definitions of governance, the political system is viewed as a complex system of formal and informal arrangements that are both ill-defined and unstable. Governance highlights the importance of those formal and informal arrangements in the political economy (Gibson, et al. 2005). Governance has also been defined as “purposeful and authoritative steering of social processes. It includes activities of governmental and non-governmental actors (including civil societies, action networks, partners, and private-sector entities), which occur at multiple levels (Biermann et al., 2014)”. It can in a sense be seen as a collaboration between the state, the market and civil society in how they collectively choose to deal with societal problems (Zejl-Rozema, van et al., 2008).

Governance has to do with how one gets to act, through what types of interactions this can be done and to what extent actors adhere to collective decisions. Governance structures are what organizes processes in which negotiations can take place, they also determine objectives, influence motivations, and set standards. These structures are what “preform allocation functions, monitor compliance impose penalties initiate and/or reduce conflict, and resolves disputes among actors (Gibson et al., 2005 p. 17)”. This means that there is a great need for flexibility and ability to adapt to new situations and circumstances. For example, the introduction of the SDGs in a system that previously have not had to adapt to a similar framework. Further, governance has been described as a means through which democratic pluralism is secured, and it has been thought of as the diverse structured ways different interdependent actors can influence policy choices. The idea is that a plurality of preferences can be translated and transformed into coordinated action, which ensures the compliance of the actors involved (Gibson et al., 2005). In a nutshell, governance happens when the state, the market and civil society come together in different intricate ways to decide upon how society should be run, if this is done effectively the compliance of all three will be ensured, as they have all been part of the process and feel ownership over the policies. Given this, looking at SDG implementation through a governance perspective will allow for an assessment of how successful the process is likely to be.

This view of governance diminishes the role of the state in a sense as it becomes less authoritative, however that is not to say that it has no power. The state, and the government is likely to keep being an important, strong component of governance, but one should not
underestimate the role of citizen and stakeholder engagement. Engagement by those two groups are important for a number of reasons; most importantly it enhances the legitimacy of the policies that are established, it also helps to reduce the risk of conflict, it functions as an additional source of ideas and information, and through their own involvement, people learn about important issues, such as environmental protection and sustainable development (Gibson et al., 2005).

There are what can be called different modes of governance. Governance can range from very top-down and hierarchical relations between the state and the other actors in the market and civil society, it can also be more of a bottom-up situation, and of course more horizontal in terms of how different actors interact and relate to each other. Essentially it has to do with what actor has the most power to influence policies. Hierarchical governance is characterized by that the decision making is made by the lead actor, that relations between the lead actor and other societal actors is vertical, as well as by the importance of planning and control. Deliberative governance on the other hand is characterized by that decisions are made by multiple actors, that there are horizontal relations between said actors, and network management (Zeijl-Rozema et al., 2008).

Linked to governance theory is the concept of governance for sustainable development which naturally takes much of its thinking from governance theory in general. When it comes to governance for sustainable development Zeijl-Rozema et al. argue for four different types of governance based on the hierarchical and deliberative governance modes mentioned above. They include different perspectives on sustainable development as a determining factor for the type of governance that is likely to exist in a society. The ecological sustainability perspective on sustainable development is one where the main point is to keep development within planetary boundaries and the carrying capacity of the planet. It comes naturally then that this is something that can be measured, and the parameters within which actions must be contained are fixed. The focus here is on the environment, and policies set up will inevitably be based on scientific evidence and be objectively measurable. The well-being perspective on sustainable development on the other hand has a focus on all three pillars of sustainable development (social, environmental, economic). In this perspective different and diverse opinions co-exist, and the goals that are set up are based on societal preferences, which means that it is contextually determined. This then leads Zeijl-Rozema et al. to argue for four distinct types of governance for sustainable development; the ecological sustainability-hierarchical type; the ecological sustainability-deliberative type; the well-being-hierarchical type, and; the well-being-deliberative type (Zeijl-Rozema van, et al., 2008). A more through description of each of the different modes of governance for sustainable development will not follow here, however it might be interesting to highlight which mode will most likely be the one that is being used in the process of adapting the SDGs to a national context in Sweden.

The type of governance for sustainable development that is likely to be the approach when it comes to adapting the SDGs to a national context in Sweden, or any other country, is the well-being-hierarchical type of governance for sustainable development. In this type of governance, the end goal is not well defined, rather it is seen as being related to well-being and quality of life as a result of societal preferences. There is uncertainty when it comes to the goal setting, and the government draws upon society in the goal setting process, however, the government is still the main actor in setting the goals. The government realizes that the goal is a result of societal preferences and that the goal therefore can change if said preferences change. The
leading actor is in charge of how the goal should be realized, the government in this case coordinates and organizes the work towards the goal and takes into consideration the important roles that technical fixes, behavioral changes and system innovation play for the realization of the goal that has been decided upon. Focus is put on both the goal setting process and the achievement of goals. While the goals are set by the leading actor they are sensitive to trends and preferences in society, and thus the goals are subject to change if needed. However, this would be an active choice initiated by the leading actor. Some disadvantages of this type of governance for sustainable development would be that the non-leading actors might be unwilling to follow the path that the leading actor has set out for them. There might also be some issues arising from the nature of sustainable development as being as uncertain as it is and that the leading actor is attempting to use a linear approach to reach their goals for sustainable development (Zeijl-Rozema van, et al. 2008). Given that the SDGs are set already, this might not seem like the most relevant approach, since there is little room for renegotiation when it comes to the goals, and that the state is unlikely to be able to take into account societal preferences in overall goal setting. However, if you look at the SDGs as a global endeavor, they were highly negotiated and reached by discussions between multiple stakeholders, not only Member States of the United Nations. Further, the goals and targets are formulated very broadly as they are to be applicable universally, and as such more specific goals will have to be set by each member state, and that process is one that the main actor would do well to lead while also taking into consideration societal preferences. Olle Frödin in his article Researching Governance for Sustainable Development: Some Conceptual Clarifications highlights how social sciences often overestimate the likelihood of achieving consensual decision-making when it comes to complex phenomena in society. And that the trust that knowledge about an issue and a problem alone will lead to adequate action and solutions is misguided (2015). It is clear that well-being is the end goal of the SDGs and it is then arguably clear that a hierarchical approach to governance will be the best option for Sweden when it comes to SDG implementation since much of the framework is already set in place.

Using ideas and theories regarding governance for sustainable development specifically when assessing the situation in Sweden for SDG implementation will help pinpoint where there might be issues worthy of focusing on more than others. Governance in general is a broad concept that is very difficult to quantify and describe effectively as a whole, particularly given the scope and time restraint of this research. Because of this, the framework that Gibson et al. has developed regarding key components of governance for sustainable development are used in this paper. The framework is explained and discussed in the section below.

3.1.1 Key components of governance for sustainable development

Governance for sustainable development can be said to have a number of components that needs to be fulfilled for there to be effective governance for sustainable development. Gibson et al. has developed a number of key components that they argue are crucial. Those are as follows; policy integration; shared sustainability objectives; sustainability-based criteria for planning and approval of significant undertakings; specified rules for making trade-offs and compromises; widely accepted indicators of needs for action and progress towards sustainability; information and incentives for practical implementation; and programmes for system innovation (Gibson et al., 2005). Using these key components of governance for
sustainable development as a measure for judging Sweden’s ability to adapt to the SDGs is an attempt to distinguish the exact areas that are worthy of taking into account, and how they could be analyzed. The framework is a good tool for this type of analysis as it is not too strict or exclusive – it incorporates many aspects of sustainable development while still being open to interpretation in terms of how the state of the key component should or could be analyzed. This gives both flexibility and structure to the analysis, and functions as a frame for the research conducted in this paper.

A Policy integration is an important part of governance for sustainable development, as sustainable development as a topic itself has to do with integration of so called pillars, which have not previously been considered as interconnected and interdependent. When it comes to governance it has to do with the interrelations between government policies and corresponding and complementary initiatives and positions of other actors involved in governance, such as from the market and civil society. One thing that has happened with the evolution of the modern state is unfortunately that there has been an increasing degree of sectoral specialization in an effort to deal with different and complex problems. This development has helped societies react in appropriate manners to particular problems, but it has also lead to problems when societies have failed to address broader issues – instead of looking at the whole picture they have been happy with partial solutions that are inadequate, or in some cases even damaging. Sustainability is not something society as a whole will be able to achieve without integration in policies. Additionally, what is needed is improved interaction between governmental and non-governmental institutions. However, one should be clear on that policy integration does not necessarily mean that there should be one big integrated policy for dealing with all issues. Specialized policies will still be crucial, however there is a need to be clear with where this integration is necessary and where specialization is required for achieving best results and maintaining a sustainable society (Gibson et al., 2005). As Gibson et al. expresses it: “Effective integration for practical decision making centers on acceptance of common overall objectives, coordinated elaboration and selection of policy options, and cooperative implementation designed for reasonable consistency and, where possible, positive feedbacks (2005, p. 19)”.

Studies have been made that have looked at policy integration in different countries, and the general conclusions that can be drawn from them is that policy integration on a vertical scale has been the most effective in terms of environmental policy (Gibson et al., 2005). Environmental Policy Integration (EPI) has been closely linked to sustainable development, even though it, as the name suggests, has to do with how environmental aspects can be integrated effectively into policy, and not specifically about how all three dimensions can be integrated. Simply put, EPI refers to how environmental concerns are incorporated into sectoral policies that traditionally fall outside of the environmental policy domain. This means that in areas such as agriculture, urban planning, and transport, to just mention a few, environmental aspects are taken into consideration. This idea started after the realization that institutional specialization of policies for different sectors often result in a lack of consideration of environmental aspects. EPI is an opportunity for making environmental policy more effective as sectoral policies have a huge potential for influencing root causes of environmental pressures (Driessen et al., 2014).

B Shared sustainability objectives essentially means that there should be consensus on what type of sustainable development one wants to achieve (Gibson et al., 2005). Sustainable development might seem like a straight forward concept, but there are many interpretations of
the concept and many different ideas of how to reach sustainable development. Having the same goal and idea of where one wants to go is crucial for effective governance for sustainable development. In the commonly called Brundtland report the following definition is given: “Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (World Commission for Environment and Development WCED, 1987, p. 45)” other definitions have highlighted the need to sustain systems; it might be production systems, social systems, environmental systems, or all three simultaneously (Klauer, B., 1999).

Two common types of understanding of sustainable development is the ideas surrounding strong and weak sustainability. In essence it has to do with how you view the world, and how the three different pillars of sustainability – environmental, economic, and social – are interconnected. At its core of the debate is the problem with substitutability and trade-offs between natural capital and social and economic capital. “Weak sustainability postulates the full substitutability of natural capital whereas the strong conception demonstrates that this substitutability should be severely seriously limited due to the existence of critical elements that natural capital provides for human existence and well-being” (Ballet et al. 2015).

Strong sustainability holds for true that the environmental pillar dictates the boundaries of all social and economic activities. Disregarding the environmental boundaries in favor of economic or social gains would in essence be unsustainable, no matter how big the gain is perceived to be. In weak sustainability on the other hand there is room for compensation: an environmental loss can be legitimate and defensible as long as the expected gain can compensate the loss well enough (Ballet et al., 2015). An example of this could perhaps be ensuring food security by producing crops in an environment which in the long run cannot sustain such activities. In weak sustainability this could be argued as a sustainable practice because the gains of such an activity would (possibly) outweigh the losses that come as a result of the inevitable environmental degradation.

Looking at it in this way makes it clear that shared sustainability objectives is a crucial part of sustainable development implementation – one cannot expect success unless different groups have the same idea of where they are going, and what they are willing and not willing to do to reach that goal.

C Sustainability-based criteria for planning and approval of significant undertakings. This simply means that in order for private or public entities to initiate major projects, such as constructing a railway or a shopping mall for example, a sustainability assessment must be made. This is already fairly common when it comes to environmental assessments. There are instances where ‘environmental’ is meant to include social, economic, cultural and biophysical aspects and how they interact (Gibson et al., 2005). Two types of assessments that can be done, and that are appropriate in different situations are environmental impact assessment (EIA) and life cycle analysis (LCA). Another common assessment type is the cost-benefit analysis (CBA).

Environmental impact assessment is, as the name suggest, an assessment of what impacts something might have on the environment. As such, it is an assessment done before the start of the project. EIAs aim at identifying the bio-geophysical environmental impacts, but also impacts and consequences for human health and well-being, usually when it comes to proposed
industrial development, legislation, or other projects. An EIA must include a thorough description of which results the project is likely to have and be written in a language that is easy to understand for people who might be effected by the project (Allaby, 2015). A life-cycle analysis on the other hand has to do with products, it is a way of analyzing and evaluating the amount of inputs and outputs of material and energy that goes into the life-cycle of a product, meaning from the extraction of raw material to final disposal (Park, 2007). Cost-benefit analysis does not usually get connected to environmental values as such. It is a quantitative assessment method of measuring both the long-term and the short-term financial and social costs and benefits (losses and gains) that come out of an economic decision. Essentially, financial values are assigned to each cost and each benefit, which are then measured against each other, guiding the decision making. There are many issues with this type of assessment, for one it is notoriously difficult to assign monetary value to intangible things such as for example aesthetics, and how to take into account what might happen or not happen in the future. Essentially this method and approach assumes that everything can be summarized down into a monetary value, and that that value is more important than any environmental, ecological, or health issues that might arise, unless these have been “costed”. CBA excludes both political and moral judgement, this means that what is acceptable does not change with time, neither does what is right or wrong. Further is does not distinguish between who should or may benefit or pay the costs (Park, 2007).

CBA has generally been criticized when it comes to sustainable development as insufficient, it is argued that the net benefit of an action might not always justify an act, coupled with the difficulty of assigning value accurately as discussed above, CBA can be seen as too simple a tool for assessing consequences. However, there is still some value in conducting a CBA, and if done together with for example an environmental impact assessment or a life-cycle analysis, the combined result can serve as a great way of guiding significant undertakings in a way that is sensitive to issues having to do with sustainability.

D Specified rules for making trade-offs and compromises is a consequence of the realization that compromises and trade-offs are inevitable when working for attaining sustainable development (Gibson et al., 2005). There are of course many different ways in which such rules can be formulated and executed, and it is near impossible to argue for a trade-off or a compromise that everyone finds acceptable. An example of this is if a project will displace a small community from their lands, but serve to significantly increase the wellbeing of a majority of the population. That is a trade-off that the majority might be perfectly content with, while the misplaced community will most likely not see it that way. It is important that the trade-offs are well motivated and that rules are set in place to safeguard those most vulnerable in society, whether those are a group of people or an endangered species of frogs. When it comes to trade-offs majority rules is perhaps not the best way to go about it. Particularly if the needs of future generations are to be taken into account in a fair manner. That being said, trade-offs are an inevitable part of large scale societal projects, and having set rules for how trade-offs will be handled will serve to increase the protection of vulnerable groups.

E Widely accepted indicators of needs for action and progress towards sustainability is important in the sense that it gives direction and a way to measure progress. Indicators can be a good way of clarifying what is important. They are also devices of education and empowerment. Well defined indicators that are well integrated with each other can function as
a great foundation for sustainable development and decision making that is aiming towards achieving sustainability (Gibson et al., 2005).

However, sustainable development indicators are not uncomplicated, for one they are based on value judgements. What is seen as a sustainable solution or goal in one setting might not be seen as that in another setting. This is particularly true when it comes to creating indicators for sustainable development, as the concept in itself is inherently complex. There are always inbuilt value judgements and subjectivity in indicator development and use, meaning there will always be some who “win” and some who “lose”. The meaning and interpretations of sustainability indicators will be different depending on the context in which they are used, indicators will be used and interpreted differently in Sweden compared to in Kenya, for example. Indicators can be an effective way of communicating what is important, and where in the progression towards a goal a society is. The aim of indicators in many ways is to reduce complexity and increase understanding. It is a way of quantifying complex concepts, such as sustainable development, into easy to understand goals (Mineur, 2007).

F Information and incentives for practical implementation is crucial for effective governance for sustainable development. Information and incentives are ways in which collective societal action becomes a reality. There are many examples of policy instruments that can be used to achieve this, for example procurement rules, liability laws, education programmes and product labelling to only mention a few, and many of these policy instruments can be combined in numerous of ways. Market-based or influenced decision making will continue to be a big part of governance and changing these to take into account sustainable development issues to a greater degree is a challenging task (Gibson et al., 2005). As Gibson et al. puts it: “Identifying, evaluating, and monetizing externalized costs is often frustrated by limited knowledge, competing methodologies and moral dilemmas. … resistance to imposition of cost internalizing measured is common even in simple cases involving the well-accepted ‘polluter pays’ principle (2005, p. 22)”.

There is a lot that can be said about incentives and what types of incentives are most effective for what actors in society and so on. It can be taken as a given that incentives for the private sector come in the form of tax benefits and other ways in which they may increase their revenues. Citizen participation can be considered to be a crucial part in creating incentives for practical implementation in the sense that if the citizens feel involved in decision making processes they are more likely to understand why certain measures are needed as well as making them more willing to take their own initiatives towards sustainable development. Research has shown that citizen participation is an integral part to the pursuit of environmental protection and sustainable development. A citizens’ willingness in taking part in sustainability programmes is related to their “relationship” with government officials. Simply put participatory governance creates programmes and initiatives that can be implemented – collaboration and mechanisms that are driven by citizens are important for solving conflicts and effective and good planning of policy, as well as policy implementation. Successful processes that have to do with citizen participation are ones that share information openly, engage and interact with people, and that are reaching out to all stakeholders. Citizen participation builds trust in the government, as well as enhances meaningful interactions between stakeholders. It is also a facilitator for learning and education (Hawkins & Wang, 2012).
Programmes for system innovation simply means that there is a need to create policymaking frameworks that are built to identify, nurture and coordinate action when it comes to technology and accompanying co-evolving societal processes, meaning continuous changes in both formal and informal institutions. This means that governance for sustainable development has to be more oriented towards the long term, in terms of its focus on learning, adaptation and innovation. A crucial part is for governance for sustainable development to be more anticipatory and prepared for changing circumstances in an ever evolving world where parameters constantly change. It is important that the system is adaptive and willing and able to create new linkages and new roles, and perhaps most importantly, a new logic for what is appropriate. (Gibson et al., 2005).

Governments are naturally a key component of allowing effective system innovation. The concept of National Innovation Systems (NISs) has to do with knowledge accumulation and establishment of necessary infrastructure to increase the generation of knowledge, as well as the implementation of technology policy. In this approach, innovation is viewed as part of a process that develops knowledge that is of economic relevance, which means that it is also a determinant of economic growth. It is a complex process and innovators do not innovate in isolation from each other; rather they interact with each other in order to gain, develop and exchange resources, information, and knowledge. Three factors are said to influence the behavior of so called “economic agents of production”, the first being the role that governments play in support of developments in technology and science, the second being interactions between the different actors and how this interaction has learning effects, and the third being the skill base and infrastructure behind the development of technological and scientific outcomes (Singh, 2004).
4. Method

The method used in this research is a qualitative, interpretive research method. Interpretive methods are commonly used by many different types of scholars, for example historians and feminist theorists. The method is also used by political theorists and when analyzing contemporary governmental and organizational documents (Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2006), making it very relevant for this particular research. Generalization has been said to be a problem when it comes to interpretive research, as has the rigorousness and objectivity of the approach. This has however been argued against by questioning the understanding of the terms rigor and objective (ibid.). It can be argued that any research conducted is subject to generalizations by the researchers. By using an interpretive method, the researcher can acknowledge this and work with and around this perceived problem. This research should be seen in this light; it is interpretive in the sense that it makes conclusions based on documents chosen for the explicit purpose of being able to answer the research questions posed. Given the time and the scope of this research there was no allowance for more in-depth interviews or quantitative content analysis of documents for an evaluation of all key components of governance for sustainable development. Further, it can be seen as an attempt to explore the utility of the framework that is governance for sustainable development for judging the implementation prospects of the SDGs in Sweden.

Where possible secondary sources have been utilized in the form of previous research or reports done by OECD, for example. In some instances, for example when looking at if there are indicators established for sustainable development, a simple search has been made to establish if there are any such indicators used, an if so what those are. The basis for the research has been a literature and document review – through looking at previous research and reports detailing aspects of the governance situation in Sweden, conclusions have been drawn regarding how the key components of governance for sustainable development is represented in Sweden particularly when it comes to the environmental dimension of sustainable development.

The reason behind the use of this method is the complexities of the issues that are being looked at. Rather than looking at one key component of governance for sustainable development in depth, the choice was made to look at all key components to get a more holistic picture of the situation and thus also the opportunity to get an insight to what challenges there might be to SDG implementation in Sweden. Given this the use of secondary sources was necessary as the time frame did not allow for a more in depth research on all key components.

4.1 Operationalization and material

As stated in the previous section, the method and material that has been analyzed are mainly secondary sources in the form of previous research and reports completed by entities such as the OECD. Here a more through operationalization of how the seven key components has been researched is made. What goes for all of them is that looking (mostly) at secondary sources has been chosen as the method out of convenience, since this research lacks the resources and time to go into in-depth quantitative research on all the key components. It should also be acknowledged that in order to make the key components researchable and operationalize them, some simplifications have been made. The goal is simply to give an indication of the situation
in Sweden regarding the key components of governance for sustainable development from an environmental sustainability perspective, not to offer an in depth analysis on each of the key components. The goal is to paint a general picture in broad strokes in order to assess the readiness of Sweden to adapt to the SDGs from a governance for sustainable development perspective.

The material has been chosen through qualitative and purposive sampling, as is common when using a qualitative method (Bryman, 2011), meaning that the documents have been chosen based on the research questions posed in the first chapter of this thesis as well as with a focus on environmental sustainability. A discussion for the reasoning behind this can be found in the delimitations chapter.

Policy integration has been looked at through a literature review and look into previous research. There has been a lot of research conducted on policy integration in Sweden, particularly when it comes to environmental policy integration. By looking at previous research on the topic, an image of the state of policy integration in Sweden can be made without having to conduct in depth research through looking at policy integration directly. The reason for this approach is simply that the scope of this thesis is limited. However, since there is a lot of literature and previous research on the subject, this should not be seen as a limitation, or that it in any way limits the validity of the results that are reached. A report titled “Integration of Environmental Consideration into other policy areas” (Naturvårdsverket, 2005) has also been used as a source.

Shared sustainability objectives has been looked through investigating if the sustainability objectives set by the state is shared by the major actors in the business sector. The major actor that has been focused on is the confederation ‘Svenskt Näringsliv’ which is the leading business advocate in Sweden. Svenskt Näringsliv brings together about 50 smaller business confederations, that all in turn have about 50 000 Swedish companies (Svenskt Näringsliv, 2009) within their organizations, bringing in a large percentage of the actors in the “market” part of governance. By looking at how well they proscribe to sustainability objectives set by the state you can get a good image of if there are shared sustainability objectives or not. The documents that will be looked at are responses to government communications and bills. The questions that will be looked at is what the opinions are on the Environmental Quality Objectives, as it is Sweden’s most ambitious undertaking when it comes to dealing with environmental sustainability and sustainable development.

Sustainability-based criteria for planning and approval of significant undertakings and specified rules for making-trade-offs and compromises has been combined into one as they are very much connected to each other. What has been analyzed here is rules set up for consequence analysis and impact analysis. Here the state of and existence of possible directives has been investigated and described. The document where directives regarding these kinds of assessments can be found is in chapter 6 of the “Environmental code” (Miljöbalken) (Regeringskansliet, 1998).

Widely accepted indicators of needs for action and progress and sustainability has been investigated through looking at what kind of sustainable development indicators Sweden has. The main source has been the Environment Quality Objectives documents.
Information and incentives for practical implementation has been investigated through primarily looking at the ‘OECD Environmental Performance Reviews: Sweden 2014’. This review is the third of its kind for Sweden and it evaluates progress towards sustainable development and green growth (OECD, 2014).

Programmes for system innovation has been looked at through looking at the Innovation Union Scoreboard put together by the European Commission. The one that is used for this research is the one for 2015. The Innovation Union Scoreboard is produced annually and is a comparative assessment of the research and innovation performance of EU Member states. It also highlights relative weaknesses and strengths when it comes to their research and innovation systems. The aim of the score board is to help Member States identify and assess areas they need to focus on in order to improve their innovation performance (European Commission, 2015).
5. Results: Key components of governance for sustainable development – presence in Sweden

5.1 Policy integration

When it comes to Environmental Policy Integration (EPI), which can be seen as the most crucial part of policy integration when it comes to sustainable development, as discussed in the theory chapter, Sweden is considered to be one of the forerunners both domestically and internationally (Nilsson & Persson, 2008). There has not been a recent official report on the matter, but the integration that was present in 2005 (when the latest official report from the Environmental Protection Agency was published) is likely to still stand, if it has not in fact been improved. In the report the agency highlights that the goal for Swedish environmental policy is to solve the major environmental problems that Sweden is currently facing. Sweden has a number of environmental quality objectives that covers 17 different topics. A number of national authorities are responsible for the achievement of these, which includes proposing measures as well as implementation and monitoring, evaluating and reporting. It is seen as being a decentralized and goal-oriented way of working where the integration of environmental objectives and consideration into other policy areas is vital. According to the report, in 2005, close to 240 central government authorities were using environmental management systems. The report also points out that environmental policy integration is far from a new thing in Sweden, rather it has been an ongoing process since the early 1990s. A Bill from the Swedish government in 2001 talks specifically about the importance of collective action and collaboration at all levels of society if environmental sustainability is to be achieved (Naturvårdverket, 2005).

Government agencies in Sweden are to observe environmental considerations in their operations, which is something that is general for all government agencies, however for some it has been more specifically underscored – the ones that are thought to operate in areas where they are likely to have particularly great impact on the environment. The ones that are highlighted are forestry, energy, fisheries, agriculture, and transport. For some of these authorities it is stated in their terms of reference that some of their main goals has to do with environmental protection. In 1998 twenty-four government authorities were given specific responsibility for the ecological dimension of sustainable development, meaning it is within their responsibility to push for environmental sustainability within their sector. This responsibility includes identifying the role that they as an authority play when it comes to environmental sustainability, and how activities within the sector effects the ecological dimension of sustainable development. The task they were given also included proposing possible environmental quality objectives for each sector, ensuring that measures were taken, follow-ups on developments in the sector, as well as cooperating with and informing actors in the sector. Reports were produced in 1999 and in 2003, which also included sections on integration and coordination with other environmental assignments. The Swedish Environmental Protection Agency was given the task of supporting the different agencies in this (Naturvårdsverket, 2005).

The 24 authorities that are part of this work are: The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), the National Social Insurance Board, the National Board of Health and Welfare, the Swedish National Railway Administration, the Swedish National Road Administration, the Swedish Maritime Administration, the Swedish Civil Aviation Administration, the National Agency for Education, the Swedish Board of Agriculture, the
The conclusion on policy integration is then that there is plenty of policy integration when it comes to environmental concerns of sustainable development.

5.2 Shared sustainability objectives

This section is based on two main documents that Svenskt Näringsliv has come out with in response to the Environmental Quality Objectives (EQOs).

The text surrounding the Environmental Councils’ evaluation of the Swedish Environmental Quality Objectives was published in 2009 and generally expresses a positive viewpoint regarding the objectives. The business sector (as represented here by the Svenskt Näringsliv confederation) is over all positive to the long term goals that has been set up and they see that the 16 goals can function well as a guiding factor when it comes to environmental politics both nationally and internationally. They express that Svenskt Näringsliv think that it is important that everyone in society should feel effected and included, but that they think that at the time of their report it came off as more of a job for government agencies. They expressed that for further steps in this direction, more dialogue with actors from the business sector was crucial (Svenskt Näringsliv, 2009).

Nine specific points were highlighted to illustrate the opinions of the confederation and its members, some of which are interesting enough to bring up here. First, they wanted the process with the Environmental Quality Objectives to be more transparent and open, and that knowledge and experiences gained from the work should lead to better handling of goal conflicts. They also highlighted that the reasons to why the objectives are not reached should be identified and evaluated. Second, they expressed that they want better consequence analyses. Third, they expressed that the role of the EQOs should be made clearer and that the connection to economic and social aspects in the attempt to reach a sustainable development should be made clear. Fourth, they expressed that they think that the objectives as they are now are too many and too difficult to get a general overview of. The number of objectives needs to be reduced, simplified and prioritization between the goals is needed. Fifth, they question the current way of working with the objectives and want the business sector to be involved in earlier stages of the process since the business sector is an important part in the work towards realizing the objectives. Sixth, they thought that the objectives should continue to not be judicially binding for single companies. Lastly, they expressed that environmental allowances according to the environmental code have too long processing times, which delays installations of new, more environmentally friendly techniques, which is a situation that negatively effects the realization of the EQOs (Svenskt Näringsliv, 2009).

Generally, Svensk Näringsliv is expressing positive thought on the EQOs, and that Sweden is attempting to be a forerunner in environmental endeavors. They do however want to become more included in the process of developing them, and that the process surrounding following
the rules set up should become more effective. Gibson et al., 2005 The conclusion then should be that the Swedish government and the business sector have very similar sustainability objectives and that the business sector would welcome even more involvement in the process of establishing these objectives. It should however be acknowledged that this willingness to be part of the process might stem from a desire to shape objectives in a direction that is more in accord with their own interests, rather than the interests of the Swedish people, society or government.

5.3 Sustainability based criteria for planning and approval of significant undertakings and specified rules for managing trade-offs and compromises

As stated in the methods chapter, assessments of this kind is regulated in the so called environmental code (Miljöbalken). The code stipulates that an environmental impact assessment is to be conducted before the start of a significant undertaking, as well as during them and if there is wish to change them. The type of significant undertakings that are covered are environmentally harmful activities and health protection, activities in relation to water (rivers, lakes, oceans, wetlands etc.) as well as agriculture and related areas. Special allowance has to be given for activities that has to do with nuclear activities, geologic storage of carbon dioxide, roads and other shipping lanes as well as activities that are to take place in protected areas, environmental impact assessment then functions as a base for the evaluation. The government can give allowances to step away from these rules if the consequences can be argued to be insignificant enough (Regeringskansliet, 1998).

The purpose of the environmental impact assessments is to identify and describe both direct and indirect consequences on people, animals, plants, soils, water, air, climate, landscapes, and cultural environment. They are also supposed to look at some things from a long term use perspective, especially when it comes to soils, water, the physical environment, material, raw materials, and energy. When it comes to handling of chemicals a security assessment is also to be included in the evaluation. All this together is intended to create an assessment looking at impacts for both the environment and the health of the population (ibid.).

The assessments should always include the following:

- Description of the undertaking, including information about placement, structure, and scale.
- A description of actions that are being planned to combat negative environmental consequences.
- All information that is needed to evaluate and point to the main impacts for peoples’ health, the environment, and the long term use of soils and water and other resources that the activity might bring.
- Description of alternative locations and structures of the project, if those exist and a motivation for why the alternative that is being evaluated were chosen. It also includes a description of consequences that is likely to come of not moving forward with the project.
- A non-technical description of the above points.

(ibid.)
EIAs are not only regulated in the Environmental Code, it can also be found in the Civil Aviation Act, the Roads Act, the Certain Pipelines Act, the Certain Peat Deposits Act, the Minerals Act, the Construction of Railways Act, and in the Electricity Act. There is because of this no single authority that is responsible for EIAs, rather the authority that is responsible for approving the project is also responsible to assess if the EIA lives up to the requirements in the Environmental Code or not. Businesses have been complaining about that EIAs are required for too many activities where the potential impact is rather low, and that the procedure itself is too long (OECD, 2014).

Once the assessments are completed relevant government agencies will decide if they are to approve the project or not. There are however no directives regarding how this is to be done, as it appears to be done on a case by case basis, which then also means that there are no specific rules when it comes to trade-offs. This weakens the importance of the EIA, since the deciding agency can look at them, decide that the environmental risks involved are worth it, and move ahead with a project that might be detrimental to the environment. It could also mean that the same EIA submitted in two different places could get two different verdicts, one allowing for the project, and one deeming it too risky.

The conclusion then is that there are rules for sustainability based criteria for planning and approval of significant undertakings even though there are no specific rules regarding trade-offs. That there are no specific rules regarding trade-offs and how the assessments should be evaluated is a problem, and brings into question the validity of the process in its entirety.

5.4 Widely accepted indicators of needs for action and progress towards sustainability

Indicators of needs for action and progress towards sustainable development have existed in Sweden on a national level previously, though recently those indicators have not been used. In 2006, 87 indicators for sustainable development were developed as a continuation of Sweden’s national sustainable development strategy. Those indicators have however not been used since, (the last reporting on the indicators produced by and available at the Swedish Statistics Agency is from 2006 (SC, 2016) as Sweden decided to turn to indicators created by the EU that has a well-developed system for measuring sustainable development. A number of indicators for the Member States is published and evaluated every other years as a step in EU’s sustainability strategy. In 2012 SCB (Sweden’s statistics agency) was given the mandate to produce a report based on the EU indicators. There has not been a report with Sweden as a focus conducted since 2012 (ibid.).

The Swedish 2012 report concluded that Sweden was doing well and performing above EU standards in eight of ten categories. In the category for natural resources Sweden was performing below average EU standards, and in terms of the sub-heading greenhouse gas emissions under category climate change and energy Sweden is on par with the EU (in the second sub-category for the climate change and energy category, renewable energy, Sweden was performing above EU standards) (SCB, 2012).

The Environmental Quality Objectives (EQOs) discussed in previous sections of this report have indicators connected to them. The aim of them is to in a comprehensive way show changes in factors that are important for the realization of the EQOs. The indicators have been chosen by the government agencies that are responsible for each of the objectives. The purpose of the
goals is that they should function as a follow up mechanism for the objectives, show if the environmental work is moving in the right direction or not, show the state of the environment, and function as a foundation for decisions and actions to be taken. There is however a need for more and better developed indicators, and there has been an ongoing project with the responsible government agencies to develop better indicators, both nationally and regionally (Naturvårdsverket, 2016).

In conclusion, there are indicators that Sweden has used previously, but the acceptance level of them can be discussed since no regular evaluations of them has been conducted. The Environmental Quality Objectives have indicators connected to them, and they are routinely updated and used extensively on both national and international levels.

5.5 Information and incentives for practical implementation

The OECD report regarding environmental performance in Sweden that came out in 2014 is a good estimate of how well the practical implementation of the environmental aspects of sustainable development is working in Sweden today. It mainly covers two topics that are of interest here, the policy-making environment in Sweden, and how the move towards green growth is progressing (OECD, 2014). This section is not aiming at bringing up all incentives for practical implementation or channels of information, as that is far beyond the scope of this research.

Sweden has a rather decentralized governing system, which means that a lot of the responsibility for implementing national policies and legislations fall on the 290 municipalities, higher-level authorities generally only function as to give guidance and provide co-ordination mechanisms in order to ensure that implementation is consistent nationwide. The report found that both governmental and non-governmental stakeholders think that there is a lack of consistency in the implementation of environmental legislation. The main reasons for this, the report states, is the imbalance of financial resources and of technical skills, differentiating local interests, and the constitutional independence of local authorities. An evaluation by the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency found in 2012 that there is an ‘implementation deficit’ in a number of environmental policy areas, mostly because of poor control from the government and limited resources.

The Environmental Quality Objectives is mentioned specifically as a unique way of trying to implement sustainable development, but it is also highlighted that there are many challenges with implementing it and realizing the objectives and that Sweden does not have a clear strategy for how to deal with these issues. The report also brings up that there used to be a NSDS (National Sustainable Development Strategy) and connecting indicators, but that it was deemed redundant because of the Environmental Quality Objectives system (OECD, 2014).

A number of non-regulatory instruments, what can be called environmental management systems also exist. For example, Sweden increased the number of ISO 14001 EMS standard certifications between 2002 and 2012 by 67% (ibid.). The ISO 14001 EMS system is a way for companies to become aware of their environmental responsibilities and what their legal and regulatory accountabilities are, as well as being able to control and manage risks. The certificate is given to companies that are aware of their environmental responsibilities and obligations and are looking to reduce their impact on the environment (ISO Quality Services Ltd, 2016).
There are a lot of economic instruments used to tackle environmental issues, in 2001 there was a tax reform that aimed at shifting taxes from labor to environmentally harmful activities. Some examples are; excise tax on electricity consumption; excise tax on fuel oil products etc.; CO2 tax on fuel oil; green electricity certificates; tax on waste discarded in landfills; taxes, deposit-refund systems or other collection systems on beverage containers/packaging; taxes on other packaging; annual circulation (transport); environmental or noise charges on aviation; road congestion tax, tax on extraction of certain raw materials; and, tax on pesticides. There are however some environmentally harmful incentives, for example subsidies in primarily the transport sector that still needs to be dealt with, but there are also many environmentally motivated subsidies, mostly when it comes to management of environmental resources (OECD, 2014).

When it comes to providing the Swedish population with environmental information all official documents that are not covered by specific secrecy provisions are open and available to the public, including in instances where private companies are executing public service functions. The Swedish Environmental Protection Agency has developed a database where citizens can download environmental information and publications. About 81% of swedes considers themselves to be well informed about environmental issues, and the level of satisfaction with the information that is provided is highest among all EU states. The Swedish Environmental Code further guarantees the right of the public to participate in environmental assessment and permitting decisions, something that NGOs have used to play an important role in challenging operators and authorities to effectively motivate their positions (OECD, 2014).

Education for sustainable development is an important part in offering information to the public that will incentivize them to act. Education for sustainable development is widespread, and starts already in pre-school levels. There has recently been a shift form focus on environmental education to education for sustainable development, which includes all three pillars of sustainable development. It is also included in the Swedish Higher Education Act that universities and institutions for higher education should promote sustainable development. Since 2011 these institutions have to report on their environmental work to the government (ibid.).

In conclusion, Sweden has a well-developed system for incentives for implementation, as well as a good track record when it comes to providing its citizens with information on environmental issues. Rules regarding environmental participation by citizens does extend to other areas as well, and the norm is an open and inclusive democratic process.

5.6 Programmes for system innovation

The so called Innovation Union Scoreboard (IUS) is produced annually and is a comparative assessment of the research and innovation performance of EU Member states. It also highlights relative weaknesses and strengths when it comes to research and innovation systems. It is to help Member States identify and assess areas they need to focus on in order to improve their innovation performance. The Innovation scoreboard for 2015 revealed that overall, the EU’s level of innovation is stable, but that the financial crisis left an impact on the innovative activity of the private sector. The number of innovative firms is declining, as well as venture capital investments. Further, SME’s innovations, patent applications, exports of high-tech products and sales of innovative products is also in decline. However, there has been improvements in areas
such as human resources, business investments in research and development and the quality of science (European Commission, 2015).

Sweden is generally scoring very high in the IUS. The review is done on the basis of three different types of indicators and eight innovation dimensions, meaning it captures 25 different indicators. The Member States are then divided into four different performance groups based on their average innovation performance: innovation leaders, innovation followers, moderate innovators, and modest innovators. In the 2015 IUS Sweden scored in the innovation leaders category together with Denmark, Finland, and Germany, with Sweden actually claiming 1st place (European Commission, 2015).

The conclusions drawn in the IUS is that countries that score high have balanced innovation systems, which means that they have strengths in all dimensions, something that is true for Sweden. Sweden scores high and above EU average in seven of the eight dimensions, the exception being economic effects, where Sweden scores just below the EU average. Sweden scores among top countries in the following dimension; human resources; open, excellent and attractive research systems; finance and support; firm investments; and, intellectual assets. Sweden does not place in the top in the following; linkages and entrepreneurship; innovators dimension; and, economic effects (ibid).

Sweden might be a high scoring innovation leader, and the innovation performance was steadily increasing until 2012, however since then it has been in decline, and in 2014 the decline was rather sharp. However, the average performance relative to the EU was still 33% over average in 2014. The two areas where performance has declined that is worth specifically mentioning is finance and support which declined by 6.2% and venture capital investment which declined by 14%. More modest declines were registered when it comes to sales share of new innovation and innovative SMEs collaborating with others (ibid). In conclusion, there is generally a great climate for system innovation in Sweden, though there are of course areas where more can be done, and the fact that Sweden’s innovation performance is in decline should be recognized.
6. Discussion

6.1 Key components of governance for sustainable development in Sweden

In this section the key components of governance for sustainable development will be discussed in how they relate to the SDGs and how the connection between them might be understood. The aim is also to discuss results in chapter five and how they can be argued to be related to SDG implementation in Sweden. It is easy to argue that all key components of governance for sustainable development will be important for Sweden to consider in relation to the work of implementing the SDGs in a Swedish context, however some key components might come to prove to be more important than others, especially if you remove the SDGs from the general idea of achieving sustainable development. The key components might very well be crucial in achieving sustainable development, but perhaps less so in terms or implementing the Agenda itself, which in truth is just one small step in the direction of reaching sustainable development. For example, if Sweden has a well-developed framework of indicators for sustainable development with a very set structure for how these assessments were to be conducted that did not correspond well with the indicators that the UN has set up, this might prove to be a greater barrier to SDG implementation then if there was no system of indicators in place at all. Retrofitting a system to match with another might (but does not have to) be more complicated than building from scratch a system that incorporates the indicators spelled out by the 2030 Agenda, for example. The text below is divided based on the key components of governance for sustainable development.

Policy integration

The most important key component of governance for sustainable development that is likely to be crucial for not only Swedish adaption of the SDGs, but adaptation to the SDGs anywhere, can be argued to be the policy integration one, simply because of the nature of the SDGs. They are in their formulation, both in wording and scientifically, intrinsically interconnected to each other, and to effectively work on them you have to be aware of this interconnectedness. Given this, policy integration can be both beneficial and disadvantageous to adapting to the SDGs – if there is policy integration already but along lines that are inconsistent with how the SDGs are interconnected the changing the nature of that interconnectedness might be more complicated than if there was no policy integration in the first place. The interconnectedness of the SDGs and how they do not necessarily correspond with how the different aspects covered in the 2030 Agenda are actually interconnected can prove to be an issue. The question then becomes if you use the interconnectedness of the SDGs as a model for how the policy integration should develop, or if you should use the scientific interconnectedness instead. Using the more scientific approach will be much more complicated, as there are many more connection points there, than is being illustrated by how the SDGs are formulated. It is also important to realize that in some instances specialized policies might work better, and that there might be instances where, for the Swedish context, there will be a need for specialized policies even though in the SDGs there is clear interconnectedness between two areas. If there is policy integration that is done in line with the SDGs already, that will naturally make the process more efficient and easy. Simply, policy integration is a prerequisite for governance for sustainable development in general and in particular when it comes to the SDGs. However, as the SDGs are already so set in their
formulations, there is very little room for alternative ways of policy integration, which might cause difficulties and challenges.

Environmental Policy Integration has been focused on in Sweden, given that the environmental aspect of sustainable development is the one that historically has been forgotten, this might not be too surprising, especially since environmental considerations has been high on the agenda in Sweden for a long time. Environmental aspects are included in many government agencies’ mandates, and the Swedish Environment Protection Agency functions as the overarching agency. There could be a risk that cooperation between the different government agencies that are working on environmental issues as part of their mandate suffers where cooperation exists between them and the Environment Protection Agency, but perhaps not as much between the other Agencies that are also working on environmental issues.

The long-term perspective that is highlighted as crucial for successful policy integration is there, as illustrated by that this is a process that has been going on for a long time, and that is continuing still. This can arguably be seen as both an asset and a challenge when it comes to SDG implementation. The question is then if it will prove more burdensome to retro-fit a system already in place to fit with the SDGs and the interconnectedness in policy areas that they demand by their design alone, or if it will be easier to simply start from scratch with the SDGs as a base for how the policy integration should be organized and approached.

Shared sustainability objectives

This key component is of course important for effective governance for sustainable development. It is well reflected in the Agenda itself, if not specifically addressed to any large degree. The SDGs themselves are a list of shared sustainability objectives that the international community has agreed upon. That these goals have been so extensively negotiated and worked on during a long period of time is in itself an indicator for how shared the objectives are. And since the SDGs in themselves give specific targets, reaching and fulfilling this key component might be a fairly easy thing. One potential issue that one could argue for is that, as they are already set, and are very general in nature, they might not be ambitious enough. If the SDGs are the clear goal and reaching the very general targets set in that Agenda is viewed as the end goal, reaching consensus on more ambitious goals and targets might prove difficult. The general impression might be that the SDGs are set as they are and that they are set to be ‘enough’, however, that might not be the case. It should be acknowledged that there is a general and ambitious nature of most of the targets in the SDGs on a global level, but there might be issues when you bring it down to a more local level, especially to countries that are already doing well in many regards.

An issue arises as well when it comes to the idea of what sustainable development is or should be and how the three pillars of sustainable development relate to each other. The SDGs can be argued to represent a ‘weak’ sustainability approach where trade-offs are both expected and welcomed in certain respects. People that are more in line with the ‘strong’ sustainability perspective might not be willing to stand behind the SDGs since they believe they are too weak, which then might cause problems for the implementation of the framework, especially if these individuals are very vocal about their opinions. If the general thought in the public is that the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs are not ambitious enough to bring about actual improvements on a large scale, then why should they bother in the first place. People need to feel like the sacrifices they make are worth it.
Sharing sustainability objectives is generally not a big issue in Sweden - as far as this research has been able to conclude - in the sense that the sustainability objectives set in the Environmental Quality Objectives are shared by the companies that Svenskt Näringsliv represent. There are however some issues that one can argue can potentially pose some challenges.

For one, there are many actors that needs to be put on the same page when it comes to creating shared sustainability objectives, which makes coordination very difficult. It is difficult to create a shared sustainability agenda if there are stakeholders that feel like they were not given the opportunity to be part in setting these objectives. As discussed previously, Sweden has a long history of environmental engagement, and it could be argued that creating a common understanding of the goal for those has been a long and ongoing process, meaning that changing the shared sustainability objectives to include more general ideas of sustainable development might be difficult.

One barrier then of course is how to effectively reach out with information so that the goal for shared sustainability objectives can be realized. Information of what the objective that is being worked towards is, is crucial, and in this instance then that includes having extensive and easily accessible information to both the public and stakeholders.

* Sustainability based criteria for planning and approval of significant undertakings and specified rules for managing trade-offs and compromises

These key component really has no place in the SDGs as such, mainly because responsibility for implementation of the SDGs is placed on the Member States themselves. Since this is the case there is really no space in the Agenda itself to go over different criteria for planning and approval of significant undertakings. The same goes for trade-offs, which will have to be made in relation to the SDGs and criteria will have to be developed, but that does not fall on the international community as an entity, but rather to the Member States to handle how they see fit. One could argue that for the Agenda to be effective it would be more beneficial to develop international guidelines and standards for these criteria and rules regarding trade-offs. One should remember that these two key components of governance for sustainable development is naturally a prerequisite for sustainable development to be effective, but as such it might not be a key factor in implementing the Agenda in Sweden. There is a need here then to differentiate between incorporating the Agenda in a Swedish context and reaching sustainable development, the Agenda can be successfully incorporated as it stands, and these two key components of governance for sustainable development is unlikely to play a big part in that process, even though they will play a big part when the goal is shifted from incorporating the Agenda to actually reaching sustainable development. There is of course a flowing line between these two things, and one could argue that even if the Agenda itself does not pose any requirements for criteria or rules for trade-offs it is intrinsically a part of a successful implementation process. Simply, the Member States can implement the Agenda successfully and decide to not establish criteria for planning and approval of significant undertakings or rules for making trade-offs, and the implementation of the Agenda would still have to be seen as a success, since the Agenda itself does not talk about these things.

Disregarding the implementation issue, the lack of clear rules when it comes to trade-offs is unfortunate, and most likely the most crucial part that needs to be implemented in relation to
these two key components and to environmental sustainability specifically. Without these kinds of guidelines and rules the purpose and use of the EIAs is very questionable.

Widely accepted indicators of needs for action and progress towards sustainability

This key component will play a crucial role in the adaption of the SDGs to a Swedish context mainly because the Agenda comes with a set of indicators already attached (even if the process of formulating the exact indicators is still underway). Taking these indicators into consideration will be important in the implementation process, especially since Sweden will be expected to submit progress reports. It should not be too difficult to achieve the ‘widely accepted’ part of this key component as the indicators that the UN is working on is of a global scale, and the knowledge that all countries are expected to use the same indicator framework will make it easier to argue for them in a Swedish context as well. That is however not to say that there are no challenges connected to this key component. The biggest challenge that Sweden is facing when it comes to indicators in this sense is clearly to adapt the general and global indicators that the UN is developing into a more local set of indicators that corresponds more clearly with the situation in Sweden while still producing the relevant information for the UN indicators. It will be important to avoid duplicating work.

Sweden is already used to working with evaluating indicators when it comes to the EQOs and has previously had sustainable development indicators, even if they fell out of use when the EQOs took the place of the National Sustainable Development Strategy. That Sweden has previously worked with the EU in submitting reports on fulfillment on sustainable development indicators will also be a big asset. The EU is likely to work towards effectively incorporating the UN indicators into the EU indicator system that is already in place, and as such, the EU will be responsible for much of the work with developing more specific regional indicators, that Sweden then can use to create local, national indicators.

Information and incentives for practical implementation

This key component is present in the Agenda mainly in goal 17, as stated in the background chapter. Responsibility for implementation of the SDGs is mostly given over to the member states, however, goal 17 covers implementation aspects of the Agenda more specifically in terms of how the international community should act together. Overall goal 17 is focused heavily on how the developed world should assist the developing world, particularly the least developed countries. As such the Agenda does not offer any specifics on how to offer information and incentives for practical implementation on a national level. This again has to do with the UN’s need to at all times respect its Member States’ autonomy and independence. That the emphasis is on how the rich countries should help developing states in this endeavor, while neglecting to discuss at all how the international community should come together to assist the developed states in their implementation is also an interesting discussion about the workings of the power structure that is the international community. Unfortunately, that is not a discussion that there is time to get into here. This then leads to that information and incentives for practical implementation is not likely to play a key role in how Sweden can implement the Agenda in its national context, in terms of requirements put by the Agenda, however, for successful fulfillment and anchoring in society information and incentives will most likely play a crucial role.
Sweden clearly has many ways in which practical implementation is encouraged and assured. This makes the assumption that creating similar incentives for the SDGs to be able to be implemented should not be particularly difficult. Additionally, since Sweden is already on its way towards achieving many of the goals, the conclusion one can draw is that many of the incentives necessary is already in place, and that they might perhaps only need to be made more restrictive or attractive. Where Sweden can improve significantly, and something that has been made clear during the process of writing this report is that information to the public should be more easily available and accessible. This might be a rather big challenge simply because there is a lot of information, and reaching out with it in a compelling way that motivates people to get involved might be difficult.

Programmes for system innovation

This key component will most likely not be particularly important for Swedish implementation of the SDGs in general. Partly because of the relatively short time frame of the Agenda. The Agenda itself is open and subject to change with changing circumstances and knowledge, and innovation is of course important in regard to all attempts to tackle sustainable development issues. However, for adapting the Agenda to a Swedish context, innovation, will play a minor role. As stated above multiple times now, there is a difference between effective adaption to the SDG framework and successful fulfillment of the goals and targets set out in the Agenda. There is no doubt that innovation is a crucial part of sustainable development, and that more research is needed if the international community are to be able to tackle the challenges that they face.

Sweden consistently scores very high when it comes to innovation, in comparison to the rest of the EU. This then does not seem to pose much of a challenge as long as the decline in scores are addressed and that the trend is turned around. This is something that of course is a challenge, however, it should not be seen as too big of a challenge in connection to SDG implementation in Sweden, more of a challenge for a longer perspective. Additionally, given the short time frame of the SDGs the importance of innovation for successful SDG adaption will most likely be minor, even though it is a major part of successful sustainable development.

In conclusion, there are a couple of aspects connected to key components of governance for sustainable development that can be considered to be challenges for SDG implementation. That being said, it is important to differentiate between the process of implementing the framework in a Swedish context and succeeding with the objective of reaching sustainable development. For the former, arguably not all key components will be crucial. Given this, the usefulness of this framework when looking at SDG implementation specifically can be debated. That being said, the two aspects of SDG implementation (incorporation of the framework in Sweden and success) can be said to be so intrinsically linked that only looking at the incorporation aspects is essentially uninteresting unless the likelihood of success is looked at as well.

The argument can be made that the key components that are most likely to be crucial when it comes to Sweden’s implementation of the SDGs are policy integration, shared sustainability objectives, and widely accepted indicators of needs for action and progress towards sustainability. This is not to say that the other components are unimportant or that they are unlikely to be crucial for the success or failure of reaching the goals set out in the Agenda. What it does say however, is that these three components are directly reflected in the Agenda itself (either directly or by extension and interpretation) meaning that at the very least these three
components will need to be fulfilled to even begin to consider incorporating the Agenda. Policy coherence simply because policy integration is at the very core of the Agenda itself and its understanding of sustainable development. Shared sustainability objectives, is important in the sense that the SDGs themselves are those objectives, these are the things that the international community have decided to strive towards, and without these end objectives being shared in society reaching the goals will be very difficult, if not impossible. That it is an international effort is likely to help with this. That there are indicators being developed follows the same logic, in the package that is the 2030 Agenda indicators come included. The other components will be important for the successful fulfillment of the Agenda in Sweden, but perhaps then not of as much importance when it comes to the act of first incorporating it in Sweden, or any other country for that matter.

6.2 Possible directions for further research and governance related initiatives

This chapter aims at answering the following research question: What are possible directions for further research and governance related initiatives that Sweden can take in an attempt to overcome these challenges? This is not an attempt to come with an exhaustive list, rather it is to be viewed as an attempt at highlighting areas where more work should be done and where the Swedish government might want to focus their efforts. This section is divided into two parts. First there will be a discussion on further research that should be conducted on this topic. Second, there will be a discussion the direction of the work that Sweden is doing and what issues there might be that should be kept in mind in this process.

More research is naturally needed on this topic before a holistic and in depth description of the situation in Sweden can be made. For one, similar investigations as this one but for the social and economic pillar of sustainable development should be done, as well as a combined investigation that looks at all three different pillars of sustainable development and their interconnectedness. As it stands, this report on its own cannot come with any clear-cut answers or suggestions for how Sweden should adapt to the SDGs in general, as the focus of this study is on how the environmental aspects of governance for sustainable development are represented in Sweden and what implications this might have for SDG implementation. One thing that needs to be considered though is the limited time frame given to this endeavor. The SDGs are already in effect and actively working towards realizing them should have been long underway. Unless this type of evaluation is started as soon as possible it will be too late for it to have any impact on the process of implementing the SDGs in Sweden. A lack of this kind of research can arguably be negative for the process as a whole and jeopardize the success of the implementation. This type of evaluation of the situation in Sweden can be a very valuable tool for identifying areas where focus needs to be put, especially if it is done more in depth so that specific suggestions for action can be made.

When it comes to the work that Sweden is doing at present that is being discussed in the background chapter, much is left to be desired. For one, it is arguably too little too late. The SDGs were decided upon in September 2015 and before then they were discussed and negotiated extensively and at length. That they were coming and that Sweden would have to take action domestically did not come as a surprise with the start of 2016. The processes of evaluation that the government has asked for by 80 different agencies and the committee they
have put together could have begun their work back in September 2015, or arguably even sooner. A final action plan is to be completed by March 2017, almost one and a half years after the start of the SDGs. It is naturally difficult to come with suggestions for how this committee should conduct their work, considering that there is very little information available on how they are intending to work and how comprehensive this action plan is going to be.

Something that the working group should keep in mind while creating their action plan is of course policy integration. They will need to look at the reports that the different institutions complete and evaluate where there are overlaps and how these should be handled. It is important that the SDGs in Sweden become a collective and coordinated effort, and for that to be possible, there is need for policy integration and coherence. If the action plan does not include a plan for how to increase policy coherence in Sweden it is likely to fail. Further, the action plan will need to have an in depth plan for the process of bringing the UN indicator framework down to a national level, not only in the sense of what indicators Sweden will need to adopt, but also how the effort can be made more efficient by looking at how the UN indicators can be incorporated with already existing indicator frameworks in Sweden. What is also needed in the plan is a strategy for how to ensure that the SDGs and Sweden’s approach to the SDGs are a shared objective. The process of developing this plan through a rather small committee might be problematic then as the approach will be less anchored in the perception of the general public. If the process of creating this action plan is transparent and inclusive, meaning allowing for the general public and other stakeholders to offer insights and be part of the process, this issue should however be easily manageable.

The three specific areas mentioned above, policy integration, shared sustainability objectives, and widely accepted indicators of needs for action and progress towards sustainability, are the areas which in previous chapters have been argued for are the most important for the implementation of the SDGs in Sweden. While the other key components of governance of sustainable development has more to do with the success of sustainable development in general. For the action plan to be successful however, it should naturally also include plans for how to tackle the remaining key components. The suggestions for further research made above should then be a part of the process of creating this action plan. Given enough resources it is quite possible to complete this extensive and in depth research in time for the action plan to be able to take the findings into consideration, something it arguably should do if it is to be a worthwhile action plan that comes with concrete suggestions for action rather than generalizations.
7. Conclusion

In conclusion, there is a need to differentiate between key components of governance for sustainable development that are important for the SDG adoption process into a Swedish setting, and key components that are of a greater importance when it comes to reaching the goals. The key components that are most important for the adoption process are arguably policy integration, widely accepted indicators of needs for action and progress towards sustainability, and shared sustainability objectives. That is however not to say that the level of success of these components are directly related to how easy it is likely to be to implement the SDGs into a Swedish context. The level of success when it comes to indicators or policy integration can prove to be a hindrance if the process of retrofitting an old system to match a new system of integration and indicators is more difficult than creating a new system. This is something that should be kept in mind when working on implementing the SDGs in Sweden, it might be that the best option is to completely start over. That is however a conclusion that can only be drawn if more in-depth research is conducted.

When it comes to further research it is important to note that this research is only a first mapping if the situation, and that more thorough investigation is needed if reliable suggestions for actions are to be made. However, this research can function as a measure of where the focus on further research should be put. The most crucial point to take away when it comes to further research is the need for similar evaluations when it comes to the social and economic dimensions of sustainable development, as well as research that combines all three to get a more holistic understanding of the actions needed for the implementation process to be successful.

This further research should without a doubt be part of the process that is already underway of formulating an action plan for how Sweden should tackle implementing the SDGs domestically. If that is done the committee responsible will be able to take into consideration aspects of governance for sustainable development that are arguably crucial for Sweden to be successful at this endeavor. Also, if Sweden is to be successful at implementing the SDGs and fulfilling their commitment to the international community it is important that the action plan is ambitious and broad in scope and that it suggests specific actions rather than general areas where focus should be put.

Using the key components of governance for sustainable development as a way of assessing how Sweden can work towards implementing the SDGs on a national level is arguably a valid choice. It touches on a broad spectra of topics all related to sustainable development, and though not all key components are relevant for the implementing process, they are all crucial when it comes to succeeding in reaching the SDGs. It is however important to remember that there might be more aspects of governance that are worthy of taking into consideration that is not covered by the framework created by Gibson et al. Also, it is important to keep in mind that aspects that fall beyond the scope of governance will most likely be important for the success of SDG implementation as well, for example available economic resources.

Sweden is well positioned for succeeding in implementing the SDGs domestically, and even though there is a lot of challenges ahead Sweden has the opportunity to continue to be in the forefront of sustainable development.
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