Article

Hybrid Organizations: A Micro-Level Strategy for SDGs Implementation: A Positional Paper

Michele Bianchi [ID]

Department of Economics, University of Parma, 43121 Parma, Italy; bianchi.michele.1990@gmail.com

Abstract: (1) Background: The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a set of objectives and sub-targets that aim to promote a more comprehensive system for sustainability, peace, and social justice. The SDGs propose a more holistic approach to the evolution of society, enlarging the responsibilities and roles for their implementation; therefore, it is worthwhile asking who will be in charge of the processes to develop adequate strategies. (2) Methods: This is a positional paper based on a literature review about the two main topics of this analysis: hybrid organizations and the SDGs' governance. (3) Results: The hybrids combine diverse institutional logics within a unique organizational structure as a central tool for SDG implementation. The scientific literature explains how this organizational form is capable of mitigating possible tensions and trade-offs stemming from its heterogeneity and how hybrid structures can prove to be a useful solution for SDG implementation at the micro-level. (4) Conclusion: Although hybrid organizations can be a valuable aid to sustainable development, the absence of clear-cut coordination and responsibility structures at the macro-level could jeopardize efforts at the micro-level. In light of this hypothesis, this paper argues that hybrid organizations cannot be left in isolation in this mission, especially as the SDGs' rationality is based on a new, holistic vision of development, which exposes a risk of implausibility surrounding macro-level political forces.

Keywords: SDGs; sustainability; hybrid organizations; social economy; public–private partnership; sustainable firms; political coordination

1. Introduction

This positional paper sustains how hybrid organizations can play a strategic role in local-level SDG implementation while pointing to the need for macro-level coordination structures to mitigate issues that cannot be dealt with by hybrids alone. The SDGs are defined by a framework of 17 goals and 169 sub-targets that were established by the United Nations as being the cornerstone of the 2030 Agenda. They aim to promote more complex and integrated actions in the field of sustainable development [1] and were designed to redistribute sustainable development responsibilities and tasks amongst a multitude of actors [2]. This new set of goals and targets, which has evolved from the former Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), highlights the necessity of expanding areas of action from pure sustainable development and poverty reduction, which can be improved by wealthy countries' contributions in favor of disadvantaged nations, to a more holistic view on the notions of development, social justice, and sustainability. The SDGs concomitantly expand the objectives and the actors responsible for the achievement of these goals and targets. Diversely from the MDGs, the SDGs share the responsibility for sustainable development among political institutions at every level: from global to local and from the private sector to civil society, including citizens as well as NGOs [3].

In line with this new approach, this paper sustains the idea that hybrid organizations [4,5] can be a strategic instrument in SDG implementation. Previous works have highlighted the relevance of hybrid organizations as the driving force behind new dynamics in the field of micro-level sustainable development [4,6–10]. Hybrid organizations

combine diverse institutional logics, [5] which are constructed patterns that determine the organizational behavior, values, and functioning. In addition, this paper aims to show how hybrid organizations, due to their intrinsic nature, can mitigate tensions [11–13] and balance possible trade-offs between the SDGs [14]. "Tensions" is here intended as the issues and complications deriving from the combination of two diverse institutional logics [5,11]; they are significant for this argumentation because it is necessary to explain how hybrid organizations manage them. Hybrid organizations are challenged when attempting to apply the same mitigation effect to macro-level issues [15–17]. In this case, there are structural difficulties that hybrids cannot mitigate and a political effort at the macro-level is required. This paper expresses a position about the right use of hybrids for SDG implementation considering at which level they can have an effective role while, at the above levels, political coordination is necessary.

Despite significant innovations in the ambit of sustainable development, it is not yet clear how the 2030 Agenda's complex structure envisages coordination among such a wide plethora of SDG interventionists. Although reasonable intentions have been made to engage more parties in the areas of sustainable development implementation and the conversion of socioeconomic systems to transform them into more inclusive, low-impact structures, it appears that the absence of coordination among actors can generate critical issues. In particular, it is necessary to determine solutions that balance synergies and trade-offs between the SDGs. Hybrid organizations, which encompass a wide range of organizational forms, such as social enterprises, sustainable companies, or public–private firms, will therefore be able to balance such trade-offs. However, they still risk being faced with critical struggles that could generate wider trade-offs [18], mostly at the micro-level [12]. This problem chiefly arises when local-based initiatives, whose remit is to balance social mission, sustainable goals, or public interest with market requirements, are left alone to implement the SDGs without any kind of coordination at the macro-level.

This positional paper aims to develop an argumentation around the role of hybrid organizations and their capacity to internalize trade-offs, thus making them appropriate instruments for implementing the SDGs at the micro-level. Furthermore, the paper identifies the structural limitations of the SDGs as they expand the range of actors obliged to take responsibility for sustainable development, leaving local initiatives alone to deal with possible trade-offs and issues at the macro-scale. This paper sustains the idea that even if the enlargement of shared sustainable development responsibilities could be considered acceptable, the structure of the SDGs nonetheless requires further improvement to define the role of coordination at the above levels. After the Materials and Methods section, the subsequent section explains the evolution from the MDGs to SDGs by highlighting the main developments. Then, the scientific literature on hybrids illustrates how and why they are good solutions for SDG implementation at the micro-level. The final analysis argues how the risk of a shift away from macro-level processes can generate a disengagement of responsibility from political forces concerning general issues that compromise sustainable development.

2. Materials and Methods

This paper presents an analysis of strategies to implement the SDGs. The research develops a literature review [19,20] to find appropriate material to develop the position on this topic. The aim is to contribute to the debate, showing how it is possible to enhance the SDGs system. This analysis is built on an "integrative review" that allows developing a view on topics and related knowledge base, to review them critically, and to propose a new interpretation [21]. The integrative literature review differs from other versions because it helps to create a synthesis that "*integrates existing ideas with new ideas to create a new formulation of the topic or issue. Synthesizing the literature means that the review weaves the streams of research together to focus on core issues rather than merely reporting previous literature*" [22], p. 362. This is a method of research that can "stand alone" and support the development of a new understanding of a topic [23]; therefore, it is important to state

clearly the search process and declare how and where the literature has been found [24]. This type of review helps to present a diverse perspective on the selected topic, combining results from diverse methodologies. Furthermore, the integrative review can help to update findings on specific topics [25]; in this case, the studies on hybrid organizations and their role as SDG implementers at the micro-level.

To generate the pool of literature for analysis, the researcher conducted various searches on three databases (Pro Quest, EBSCO, Web of Science); these are the most commonly used databases for literature reviews on hybrid organizations [26–31] combining these two groups of keywords, presented in Table 1 ("hybrid organization" AND "Tensions" in Title OR Abstract OR keywords). These groups of keywords are the results of a scoping research on hybrid organizations and tensions deriving from the hybridization of institutional logic. After several runs of searches in the three aforementioned databases, these groups presented the most useful results for this analysis [4,5,11,16,32].

Table 1. Keywords for searches.

Groups	Keywords
Hybrid Organization	"hybrid organi?ation" OR "hybrid corporation" OR "hybrid firm" OR "hybrid corporation" OR "social enterprise" OR "social business" OR "social entrepreneur*"
Tension	tension OR paradox OR conflict OR trade?off OR logics OR "Institutional logics"

?: This is a wildcard symbol used to catch similar words.

The criteria search did not consider a specific period and included papers that present results from empirical research in English and published in peer-reviewed journals. This was useful to select adequate literature for the analysis on how hybrid organizations manage tensions at the micro-level. Table 2 presents the results from this analysis; For the remaining papers (n = 153) the full text of the paper was assessed for quality using a quality assessment tool developed for this purpose to rate the scientific quality of each work on the basis of six criteria [33]: (1) that the aims and objectives of the study were clearly stated and addressed; (2) a clear discussion of the context and need for the study (i.e., the justification for the study); (3) a clear description and appropriateness of the sampling strategy and method of recruitment; (4) a clear description of the methods used to collect and analyze data; (5) a clear assessment of reliability and validity of quantitative data and the credibility of qualitative data (i.e., the rigor of the process); and (6) Inclusion of sufficient original data to mediate between evidence and interpretation. Each criterion was scored (between 0 = weak, 1 = moderate and 2 = strong) to provide an overall score of between 0 and 12 for each paper. Therefore, this paper considers only papers with a general score between 8 and 12. In addition, papers about SDG implementation and the sharing of political responsibilities in a period from 2015 (when the UN created the SDGs) to 2021 were selected to integrate the analysis with results from this topic. Then, using the program NVivo to extract information, the researcher conducted the results' collection and analysis.

Table 2. Results from searches and selection.

Stages	Results
Search in Web of Science	341 papers
Search in Pro Quest	353 papers
Search in EBSCO	170 papers
Total	864 papers
After the deletion of duplications, book review, editorials	424 papers
After titles and abstracts reading	153 papers
After a second reading of titles, abstracts, and introduction section	94 papers
After quality assessment	40 papers

The following sections examine the results from searches about sustainable development in general and the applicability of the SDGs in particular. Then, the argumentation is developed around the important role that hybrid organizations have at the micro-level but not at other levels, leading to the main point that SDG implementation needs more political responsibilities.

3. Results

This section presents the main results from the analysis of the literature on hybrid organizations, how they manage their internal tensions, and how the SDG system needs appropriate solutions at each level. Subsequently, in Section 4, the paper's argument and position on the basis of these elements is developed. Below, Table 3 presents a general overview of findings from the selected papers; these compose the main elements for the argumentation of this positional paper.

Table 3. Results from the literature.

Sections	Results
SDGs, a holistic view	A new system that involves governments and other sectors; therefore, an enlargement from the previous MDG structure.
SDGs, interrelations, and trade-offs	Trade-offs can occur among these goals.
Hybrid organizations, their functioning	Hybrid organizations are able to mitigate trade-offs and therefore can be valuable solutions at the micro-level.

3.1. From MDGs' Top-Down Approach to SDGs: A Holistic View

The SDGs are the evolution of the MDGs, which featured important limitations in their capacity to address correlations between core topics, social inequalities, and other key issues such as environmental problems and equal redistribution of tasks among all actors [3,34]. The MDGs principally targeted political forces as being the main actors responsible for consistent social and economic change, especially concerning poverty eradication. The SDGs, on the other hand, propose a more integrated view and interconnection between economic systems, social inequalities, wealth redistribution, and human rights [3]. Therefore, it can be said that the MDGs proposed a top-down approach closely related to policy framework implementation and the direct intervention of both public institutions and international organizations [35]. Political responsibility, here intended as the obligation to undertake specific tasks and actions, is mainly in the hands of public institutions because they have a greater effect on societies [36]. Furthermore, national governments signed the agreement for the 2030 Agenda and they made a commitment. Nevertheless, the main limitations of the MDGs seems to be the absence of concrete implementation in legally compliant terms.

The SDGs present an approach that focuses on the integration of sustainable development and social justice alongside the rethinking of the economy. The policies have the responsibility of breaking away from old development paradigms that propose economic growth as the main influence on human wellbeing [1]. This old paradigm fails to consider the various trade-offs that exist between development and ecological sustainability. Societal transformation has to be firstly supported by a political will to change. Thus, policies that promote cross-sectoral actions and cross-goals play a crucial role in the realization of the SDGs on the political agenda. Although the responsibilities are broadened to a wider plethora of social actors, the SDGs also underline the role that governments must assume in this transformation [37]. However, this expansion of interested parties and accountability could compromise SDG implementation by blending tasks at various levels where they might serve to hide responsibilities. This paper explains how hybrid organizations can implement the SDGs by interrelating social change and sustainable development with the

economic system. They can do this thanks to the multi-institutional logic inherent to their structure, although it will remain insufficient if not accompanied by coordination of efforts at higher levels.

3.2. SDGs Are Interrelated and Involve Trade-Offs as Well as Synergies

As demonstrated by various authors [1,10,38,39], the SDG system favors the interrelation of goals and sub-targets. These authors explain how the SDG system facilitates the mobilization and implementation of these goals in local contexts [9,10,40]. Nevertheless, it is reductive to only consider how these relations positively work, as it is necessary to also assess the negative consequences of SDG implementation [14]. The SDGs can generate synergies, where progress in one goal favors progress in another, and trade-offs, where progress in one goal hinders progress in another. The implementation of an SDG requires synergy on the one hand and generates trade-offs on the other. It is therefore necessary to assess the balance between these two characteristics [41]. Furthermore, Pradhan et al. [1] conclude that SDG implementation is not simply a question of strategy development to achieve objectives but is rather more complex. Action is required to overcome this reductive vision and provide solutions that consider effects on both local and global scales, noting that a strategy is only successful when synergies outweigh the trade-offs.

Despite the reasonable premise behind the SDGs that everyone has a part to play in promoting sustainable development, an unanswered question remains: who is in charge of mitigating the trade-offs? Could hybrid organizations be the solution?

To answer this question, it is critical to be able to determine whether or not the extension of responsibility for the implementation of sustainable development has been worthwhile. It is necessary to recognize how extended responsibilities and enhanced coordination systems go hand in hand. Consequently, this analysis addresses a dual issue that involves identifying adequate solutions that help to mitigate the trade-offs at the micro-level—the task of hybrid organizations—without neglecting the importance of macro-level political responsibilities. As scientific debates on the SDGs highlight, trade-offs among the SDGs are both possible and frequent; therefore, it is necessary to elaborate a structured analysis on the system which interlaces the micro- and macro-levels.

3.3. Hybrid Organizations: Functioning and Peculiarities as a Micro-Level Solution

The term "hybrid" is associated with "organization" when two diverse institutional logics are combined into one structure [5]. Institutional logics are defined as:

> *"the socially constructed, historical pattern of material practices, assumptions, values, beliefs and rules by which individuals produce and reproduce their material subsistence, organize time and space and provide meaning to their social reality."* [42] (p. 804)

The diverse institutional logics that can constitute hybrid structures are (a) market logic, which means the organization of business activities to produce goods and services to generate revenues [17]; (b) social logic, referring to organizations with a social mission, such as social enterprises, non-profits, and NGOs [43]; (c) public logic, concerning the achievement of public interest carried out by governmental institutions [44]; and (d) sustainability logic, in line with the new concept introduced by the SDGs, meaning the coordination of resources with the aim of implementing environmental, social, and economic equality [29,45]. Consequently, hybrid organizations are miscellaneous entities since they overlap both the public and private sectors [4]. As hybrid organizations are capable of creating business models with social, public, and environmental benefits [6,7,43,46–48], they occupy a key position in local strategy development for the implementation of sustainability on a micro-scale [9]. Examples can be social enterprises that work for the social integration of people in disadvantaged conditions (SDG 10), sustainable firms that produce clean energy (SDG 7), or public-owned companies that provide health services (SDG 3).

Hybrid organizations, however, do not merely apply the idea of sustainability, social development, or public interest to their structure. They also center their business model on social, sustainable, and/or public actions and impacts [6]. Hybrid organizations can

combine commercial activities with social/public/sustainable objectives in various ways by merging strategies and dynamics from diverse institutional logics to rearrange the organizational structure [15,16,49,50]. In this sense, micro-credit is an example; it combines the logic of a bank with the social mission of enhancing disadvantaged people's conditions [16]. This reorganization enables them to act simultaneously at the micro-level—fostering social impact, sustainability, or implementing wellness—while generating revenue. This is achieved by using a "cultural toolkit" [15] that enables them to reflect on their actions and plans and to design a new logic fit for purpose [16,26,49,51,52]. This toolkit can be a set of values and beliefs that the hybrid uses to form its members' mental set and help them to reflect on the meaning of being a hybrid [38]. Indeed, those involved in the hybridization process of institutional logic develop an acute awareness of how their role constitutes a factor of change in socioeconomic contexts [15,16]. Hybrids do not copy undiscerning strategies and patterns pertaining to one logic or another, yet they are able to create "strategic isomorphism" whereby the most important elements from each institutional logic are selected and then combined into one unique structure [48,53].

As Chaves and Monzón [54] explain, social economy—one of the main features of hybrid organizations—is being able to hybridize market logic; this is defined by repositioning the focus away from profit maximization and its implicit generation of negative effects and focusing more on social missions that balance revenue generation alongside positive social impact. Social economy has had a partial effect on the macro-economy by addressing the limits of the so-called 'for-profit' model and by stressing the necessity to enhance the social responsibility of corporations. For example, this research on Australian B Corps [55] demonstrates how these hybrid organizations present their goal of generating revenues as a means to create social impact; this radically redefines the sense of "making profits". Moreover, hybrid organizations enable local communities to enhance their wellbeing by creating self-reliant solutions [56,57]. For example, certain public organizations have been transformed into new public–private firms that take responsibility for certain former public services with the aim of improving efficiency and optimizing public resources to provide better service [58,59]. Exemplarily, under the "New Public Management" agenda, the Swedish waste public system has been privatized; this has brought more efficiency, generation of revenues invested for further improvement, and the maintenance of public services [57]. Ultimately, sustainable firms aim to create new and sustainable production processes that use innovative materials, reduce pollution, or become sustainable service providers; that is, providing consultancy services to other firms on how to improve sustainability [46,47]. This is the case in many sustainable agencies that sell their services to other companies to guide their transition toward a minor ecological impact [47].

Even so, hybrid organizations can also face conflict from external sources, but, as shown by scientific research, they have developed good, relevant coping strategies. Unfortunately, hybrid organizations meet difficulties with clients due to unclear communication and misunderstandings. This consequently generates economic problems as hybrids usually witness a decrease in revenue. Therefore, hybrids have to adopt diverse strategies to deal with these tensions; the main strategy found to be useful by many authors is educating clients on the meaning of 'hybridity' [15,60]. Certain social enterprises explain with dedicated marketing and communication how they invest the revenues to generate social impact [12]. The main objective is to convince the client that hybrids not only fulfill clients' economic needs but also support the generation of social value, sustainable development, and/or public interest [12,15,60]. All of this reinforces the idea of a new logic whereby economic value is consented by social/sustainable/public value. Alternatively, hybrids can decide to segment their client pool and to dedicate specific marketing strategies and products to each segment, with some being more focused on price convenience and others on social value [15,50,61].

Hybrids can also deeply influence the supply side of business as they request heightened consciousness and greater implementation of social impact, sustainability, or public benefit. Even if these conditions can be a source of tension, lengthening the production

process [62], raising the final price [47], and necessitating specific communication with suppliers about what is expected from them [15,50], these factors can be appropriately managed. Hybrids concentrate on establishing constructive relationships with suppliers whereby they explain their intentions and focus on product requirement and production planning.

This is a fundamental factor in the development of local sustainable development strategies because, as explained above, the SDGs require greater collaboration with different sectors to achieve well-integrated strategies. Indeed, hybrid organizations devote their network resources toward sustainability because it is a key element of their mission [9]. From a broader perspective, hybrid organizations are also capable of developing collaborations and diverse forms of coordination with similar entities, which enhances a general sense of trust and reciprocity [15]. In this sense, it is possible to talk about an ecosystem of organizations associated through a similar mission, converging objectives, and the sharing of resources and practices. This is beneficial because, in this way, organizations can support each other and learn from others' experiences to enhance social, public, and sustainable values and resources at the local level [56].

Nevertheless, hybrid organizations must manage the various tensions and issues caused by their aim of combining objectives and practices from various types of institutional logic. This interconnection is similar to the main requirement of the SDGs regarding the intensification of links among economic development, sustainable growth, poverty reduction, more social justice, and peace-making initiatives. The SDGs ask parties to incorporate these various aspects within their strategies, and hybrid organizations have been proven to hold expert knowledge in this area. Scientific debate on hybrid forms has underlined the necessity of heeding the underlying tensions and trade-offs which derive from these connections; in addition, the international literature also illustrates the need for hybrids to demonstrate their capacity to reflect on their characteristics and on how to balance diverse objectives. This process allows various SDGs to be simultaneously implemented in a balanced way vis à vis the market goals that favor their survival. Despite this important complementarity, there is still a major issue to be resolved: the need to configure a global coordination structure able to mitigate trade-offs among SDGs at the macro-level.

In conclusion, hybrid organizations, such as social enterprise/business, public–private firms, and sustainable corporations, as well as many other forms, all have the ability to implement the SDG mission at a micro-level. Firstly, they are able to interconnect various aspects of sustainability: the creation of social and public value, the reduction of pollution and waste, the education of other parties on the importance of assessing the environmental impact on society, and the design of new solutions that address local issues. Secondly, they succeed in combining social/public/sustainable goals with business logic and providing a structure that is both independent and autonomous. Thirdly, hybrid organizations can influence other actors, such as local authorities, clients, or suppliers, and engage them in SDG implementation.

4. Discussion

As the relevant literature explains, a unique focus on the sole expansion of hybrids might create a critical imbalance in distribution. Moreover, political commitment at the macro-level is the appropriate answer to face major challenges that might otherwise remain unsolved if society expects hybrids to take care of them. Table 4 illustrates the intertwining of hybrid organizations and political coordination at both micro and macro level.

Despite their key role in improving local, social, and environmental initiatives, hybrid organizations present a critical constraint in so far as they experience difficulties maintaining their integrated value system and capacities to act as social and environmental organizations when scaling up to achieve large sizes [4,6]. The first reason for this constraint concerns the limited access to resources, which prevents hybrids from scaling up their size and subsequently exercising more power on the market [5,16]. The second reason is linked to the huge investment in hybrid organization management in terms of the supervision

of internal dynamics and external relationship development [12,15,60]. To successfully lobby, it is necessary to make a consistent effort toward coordinating various entities, accounting for their differences, and working toward a unified objective [60,61]. Generally, hybrid organizations have various ways of gaining legitimacy, some more practical and others more moral in nature, but by following their own individual strategy, they risk compromising a more sectorial approach [62]. Thirdly, hybrids who do choose to scale up mostly do so in the optic of optimizing resources and efforts in developing the productive structure of each organization rather than lobbying for their social role [63].

Table 4. Micro-level to macro-level bridging.

	Micro-Level	**Macro-Level**
Hybrid organizations	Can operate with multiple institutional logics, mitigate trade-offs deriving from this combination, and implement simultaneously various SDGs.	Have difficulties and structural limits to expand their capacities at the macro-level.
Political coordination	Can favor the work of hybrid organizations (or obstacles in case it does not provide proper legal recognition). It is important that it does not limit its action to this and also considers issues at the macro-level.	Can solve trade-offs among the SDGs at this level, plus implement solutions that affect the structure of society compensating the limits of hybrid organizations at this level.

Alongside the limits presented by the challenge of scaling up, hybrid organizations can also be restricted by governments. Hybrids require public recognition from governments to operate fully and, without this, the growth of the entire sector can be compromised [64,65]. As explained above, coordinating a multitude of interested parties can be costly for these organizations that are already under stress due to the complex management structure inherent to the hybrid logic. Therefore, in the absence of clear political intent, hybrids have to spend energy convincing decision makers of their important role and asking for legal recognition at the expense of trying to implement change at the macro-level. Furthermore, hybrid organizations can also find themselves compromised at the micro-level by political control if there is inadequate support [32]. Thanks to the unified nature of social mission and business activities, hybrid organizations are seen as perfectly autonomous solutions to deal with local social issues and, as such, public authorities delegate in this sense. Although public recognition of hybrid organizations is fundamental, it is also important to recall the enhanced responsibility linked to their social value, which does not always recognize economic necessities. Consequently, the dual role of balancing the generation of new social impact with further revenue can unhinge the entire organizational structure and place entities in critical economic conditions [61,66]. Another tension that can be caused by governments is the absence of an adequate legal framework for the recognition and support of economic/social hybrid organizations; this problem obliges founders to double register their organizations and to not be eligible for government benefit such as fiscal advantages [61].

Furthermore, as Günzel-Jensen et al. [10] suggest, SDG decision-makers do not automatically recognize the work of hybrid organizations. Public institutions and political forces have to take responsibility for the coordination of the bottom-up hierarchies at work at the micro-level while balancing roles of adequate pressure on society to reconvert itself toward a sustainable model with the provision of policy frameworks to support these actions. Generally, it means double efforts, on the one hand favoring autonomous initiatives at the micro-level and compensating the stress of hybridization via social recognition and economic support, and, on the other hand, sustaining political action at the macro-level that supports the general trend of sustainable change.

For these reasons, it can be erroneous to delegate the main responsibilities of implementing the SDGs to hybrid organizations based on their capacity to operate as a mechanism for combining diverse logics at a micro-level. Clearly, their role is important, meriting both acknowledgment and enhancement; however, it remains marginalized at this level and difficulties exist to expand the hybridization effect at the macro-level. This point validates the request for integral political coordination at the macro-level, which, at the moment, seems to be partial and insufficient.

The political role of SDG implementation cannot be integrated into a new holistic view of development; the SDGs are part of a multi-goal agenda that requires both vertical and horizontal political action and coordination [67]. Hybrids alone cannot achieve the objective of implementing changes at a macro-level due to their inability to scale up, as explained above, and also because they require adequate policy frameworks in order to operate more efficiently. The main implementation process has to be in the hands of governments who have the faculty of designing national and international agendas that support the enhancement of local-based initiatives such as hybrids [68]. Moreover, macro-level coordination must be based on major political efforts to consolidate responsibilities and avoiding their fragmentation, thus helping to minimize confusion and strengthen the process of improving the SDGs [67].

It is also possible to develop an argument on this point in light of the evolution of Western welfare systems. Salamon [69] examines the structure of the American welfare system, which has evolved in parallel between two levels: the first one is micro and is centered on voluntary organizations and the second one is macro, requiring state supervision. The author argues for the necessity of correct macro-level coordination to compensate voluntary organizations proposed as micro-level solutions; this is because such voluntary organizations can present problems on a national scale. Leaving autonomy to local organizations can lead to their uneven geographical distribution, and they may also suffer from imbalances in the distribution of resources. This is why it is strategic to consider macro-level coordination as a solution to this issue. Similarly, Bode [70], when examining the case of Western European welfare systems, underlines how, by decreasing national system-wide coordination between the various actors, a more volatile and heterogeneous system is created; therefore, despite civic society organizations being capable of demonstrating creativity in delivering social services at the micro-level, they suffer from a structural dispersion of efforts and sporadic territorial distribution. Again, this heterogeneity in the autonomous creation of grass-root initiatives presents a systemic issue, which is the incapacity to distribute organizations evenly, creating imbalance and trade-offs among different locations [18]. This particular focus on welfare explains how a proper system that promotes wellbeing, such as that imagined by the SDGs' promoters, cannot just rely on the independent motivation of low-level forces structured in grass-root organizations, notwithstanding their ability to hybridize diverse logics.

As Chaves and Monzós [54] explain, at the macro-level, governments have a key strategic role in coordinating the efforts of hybrid organizations because (a) they provide a policy framework that enables these organizations to function, and (b) they can assist in compensating the negative effects of the capitalist market. Therefore, macro-level political forces have to coordinate other macro-level forces to balance their roles and areas of action to create adequate sustainable development. Legal recognition is a fundamental step because it can mitigate market pressure and ensure fiscal benefits that monetize resources for economic growth [15,60,61]. As Wu et al. [57] explain, the role played by governments is necessary, not only for the aforementioned reasons but also because it can favor growth in local ecosystems of hybrid organizations that can work and mutually collaborate. To illustrate this point, they take the example of the Taiwanese Government that has designed an appropriate policy framework to support social business:

> *"In 2014, the Executive Yuan launched a three-year Social Enterprise Action Plan with a budget of NTD160 million, which invited the Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Transporta-*

tion and Communications, Ministry of Health and Welfare, and Ministry of Labor to cooperate and build up a favorable environment for Taiwan's social enterprise innovation, entrepreneurship, growth, and development, according to the four strategies of amending regulations, building platforms, raising funds, and advocating development." [57] (p. 7)

This example positively highlights how governments can take responsibility for advancing sustainable development from a different perspective. Firstly, it involves various ministries demonstrating a clear intention to develop a multidimensional solution; secondly, it supports independent bottom-up actions by citizens through social enterprise in its hybrid form to favor growth and development; and thirdly, it creates strategies that favor infrastructure necessary for the functioning of social enterprise.

The necessity of having stronger macro-level political coordination is also related to the possibility of exerting more pressure on economic and social forces that particularly compromise sustainability (e.g., multinational corporations); hybrids have neither the force nor the social remit to oblige these organizations to make radical changes. Certain structural changes cannot be made by hybrid organizations alone because some issues are generated at the macro-level. By definition, micro-level hybrids cannot be the solution even though they are broadly diffused [71].

Finally, certain other issues cannot be handled by hybrids because they regard the common good of society, such as health. As Bambra et al. [72] explain, macro-level political choices are the only ones that have the force to influence decision-making processes and change those institutional structures which affect people's lives, such as the health system. Macro-level coordination efforts have to design solutions that positively modify institutional factors that favor sustainability as intended by the new formulation of the SDGs (e.g., education, worker protection, corporate social responsibility, and long-term orientation) [69].

5. Conclusions

5.1. Problem under Analysis

This paper points out possible issues related to SDG implementation by suggesting an adequate and balanced coordination of hybrid organizations at the micro-level with political forces at the macro-level. The main problem stated in this paper is the necessity to not fully delegate the SDG implementation to organizations at the micro-level, even if they adequately function as implementers. Despite their capacities, hybrid organizations cannot solve trade-offs at the macro-level, and it is necessary to have political coordination to deal with macro-system problems.

5.2. Novelty

Hybrid organization literature proves the efficacy of these organizations to implement sustainable solutions in micro socioeconomic contexts. Hybrids fit into the SDG system because they (a) foster a new meaning of economic development, (b) have a social mission with considerable sustainable impact—according to the definition of sustainability stated by the SDGs—and (c) can handle possible trade-offs by internalizing them within their organizational structures. Considering this point, the argumentation on the whole SDG system has been extended to underline a critical issue related to the vertical structure of political responsibility.

5.3. Contribution

This caveat concerns the holistic view of society adopted by the SDGs; the issue can be considered critical, in so far that when delegating practical implementation to micro-level organizations it can serve to hide macro-level political responsibilities. This is a risk to be avoided because despite the great contribution made by hybrids to mitigate trade-offs at the micro-level, macro-level issues and trade-offs can only be faced by the political forces in charge of decision making. In conclusion, this paper supports the idea that the SDG system has to be developed with a view to advancing implementation at all levels. It is

important to acknowledge that this article presents a clear limitation being a positional paper based on literature analysis; therefore, any future investigation should examine how the issue of political de-responsibility affects the SDGs and society.

References

1. Pradhan, P.; Costa, L.; Rybski, D.; Lucht, W.; Kropp, J.P. A Systematic Study of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Interactions. *Earths Future* **2017**, *5*, 1169–1179. [CrossRef]
2. Nilsson, M.; Chisholm, E.; Griggs, D.; Howden-Chapman, P.; McCollum, D.; Messerli, P.; Neumann, B.; Stevance, A.-S.; Visbeck, M.; Stafford-Smith, M. Mapping Interactions between the Sustainable Development Goals: Lessons Learned and Ways Forward. *Sustain. Sci.* **2018**, *13*, 1489–1503. [CrossRef]
3. Fukuda-Parr, S. From the Millennium Development Goals to the Sustainable Development Goals: Shifts in Purpose, Concept, and Politics of Global Goal Setting for Development. *Gend. Dev.* **2016**, *24*, 43–52. [CrossRef]
4. Doherty, B.; Haugh, H.; Lyon, F. Social Enterprises as Hybrid Organizations: A Review and Research Agenda. *Int. J. Manag. Rev.* **2014**, *16*, 417–436. [CrossRef]
5. Battilana, J. Cracking the Organizational Challenge of Pursuing Joint Social and Financial Goals: Social Enterprise as a Laboratory to Understand Hybrid Organizing. *M@n@gement* **2018**, *21*, 1278. [CrossRef]
6. Haigh, N.; Hoffman, A.J. Hybrid Organizations: The next Chapter of Sustainable Business. *Organ. Dyn.* **2012**, *41*, 126–134. [CrossRef]
7. Lumpkin, G.T.; Moss, T.; Gras, D.M.; Kato, S.; Amezcua, A. Entrepreneurial Processes in Social Contexts: How Are They Different, If at All? *Small Bus. Econ.* **2013**, *40*, 761–783. [CrossRef]
8. Holt, D.; Littlewood, D. Identifying, Mapping, and Monitoring the Impact of Hybrid Firms. *Calif. Manag. Rev.* **2015**, *57*, 107–125. [CrossRef]
9. Bianchi, M.; Vieta, M. Italian Community Co-Operatives Responding to Economic Crisis and State Withdrawal. In *A New Model for Socio-Economic Development*; United Nations Task Force for Social and Solidarity Economy: Geneva, Switzerland, 2019.
10. Günzel-Jensen, F.; Siebold, N.; Kroeger, A.; Korsgaard, S. Do the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals Matter for Social Entrepreneurial Ventures? A Bottom-up Perspective. *J. Bus. Ventur. Insights* **2020**, *13*, e00162. [CrossRef]
11. Battilana, J.; Dorado, S. Building Sustainable Hybrid Organizations: The Case of Commercial Microfinance Organizations. *Acad. Manag. J.* **2010**, *53*, 1419–1440. [CrossRef]
12. Roundy, P.T. "Doing Good" While Serving Customers Charting the Social Entrepreneurship and Marketing Interface. *J. Res. Mark. Entrep.* **2017**, *19*, 105–124. [CrossRef]
13. Ambos, T.C.; Fuchs, S.H.; Zimmermann, A. Managing Interrelated Tensions in Headquarters-Subsidiary Relationships: The Case of a Multinational Hybrid Organization. *J. Int. Bus. Stud.* **2020**, *51*, 906–932. [CrossRef]
14. Scherer, L.; Behrens, P.; de Koning, A.; Heijungs, R.; Sprecher, B.; Tukker, A. Trade-Offs between Social and Environmental Sustainable Development Goals. *Environ. Sci. Policy* **2018**, *90*, 65–72. [CrossRef]
15. Tracey, P.; Phillips, N.; Jarvis, O. Bridging Institutional Entrepreneurship and the Creation of New Organizational Forms: A Multilevel Model. *Organ. Sci.* **2011**, *22*, 60–80. [CrossRef]
16. Pache, A.-C.; Santos, F. Inside the Hybrid Organization: Selective Coupling as a Response to Competing Institutional Logics. *Acad. Manag. J.* **2013**, *56*, 972–1001. [CrossRef]
17. Battilana, J.; Sengul, M.; Pache, A.-C.; Model, J. Harnessing Productive Tensions in Hybrid Organizations: The Case of Work Integration Social Enterprises. *Acad. Manag. J.* **2015**, *58*, 1658–1685. [CrossRef]
18. Liu, J. An Integrated Framework for Achieving Sustainable Development Goals around the World. *Ecol. Econ. Soc. INSEE J.* **2018**, *1*, 11–17. [CrossRef]
19. Machi, L.A.; McEvoy, B.T. *The Literature Review: Six Steps to Success*, 3rd ed.; Corwin: Thousand Oaks, CA, USA, 2016.
20. Acharyya, R.; Bhattacharya, N. *Research Methodology for Social Sciences*; Routledge India: Abingdon, UK, 2020.
21. Snyder, H. Literature Review as a Research Methodology: An Overview and Guidelines. *J. Bus. Res.* **2019**, *104*, 333–339. [CrossRef]
22. Torraco, R.J. Writing Integrative Literature Reviews: Guidelines and Examples. *Hum. Resour. Dev. Rev.* **2005**, *4*, 356–367. [CrossRef]
23. Callahan, J.L. Constructing a Manuscript: Distinguishing Integrative Literature Reviews and Conceptual and Theory Articles. *Hum. Resour. Dev. Rev.* **2010**, *9*, 300–304. [CrossRef]

24. Whittemore, R.; Knafl, K. The integrative review: Updated methodology. *J. Adv. Nurs.* **2005**, *52*, 546–553. [CrossRef]

25. Hopia, H.; Latvala, E.; Liimatainen, L. Reviewing the methodology of an integrative review. *Scand. J. Caring Sci.* **2016**, *30*, 662–669. [CrossRef] [PubMed]

26. Maier, F.; Meyer, M.; Steinbereithner, M. Nonprofit Organizations Becoming Business-Like: A Systematic Review. *Nonprofit Volunt. Sect. Q.* **2016**, *45*, 64–86. [CrossRef]

27. Suykens, B.; Verschuere, B.; Rynck, F.D. Commercial Heads, Social Hearts? Organizational changes and effects of civil society organizations becoming more business-like. In Proceedings of the EGPA Annual Conference, Presented at the EGPA Annual Conference, Utrecht, The Netherlands, 24–26 August 2016; p. 31.

28. Calò, F.; Teasdale, S.; Donaldson, C.; Roy, M.J.; Baglioni, S. Collaborator or competitor: Assessing the evidence supporting the role of social enterprise in health and social care. *Public Manag. Rev.* **2018**, *20*, 1790–1814. [CrossRef]

29. Cillo, V.; Petruzzelli, A.M.; Ardito, L.; Giudice, M.D. Understanding sustainable innovation: A systematic literature review. *Corp. Soc. Responsib. Environ. Manag.* **2019**, *26*, 1012–1025. [CrossRef]

30. Nielsen, J.G.; Lueg, R.; van Liempd, D. Managing Multiple Logics: The Role of Performance Measurement Systems in Social Enterprises. *Sustainability* **2019**, *11*, 2327. [CrossRef]

31. Saebi, T.; Foss, N.J.; Linder, S. Social Entrepreneurship Research: Past Achievements and Future Promises. *J. Manag.* **2019**, *45*, 70–95. [CrossRef]

32. Teasdale, S. Negotiating Tensions: How Do Social Enterprises in the Homelessness Field Balance Social and Commercial Considerations? *Hous. Stud.* **2012**, *27*, 514–532. [CrossRef]

33. Roy, M.J.; Hackett, M.T. Polanyi's "Substantive Approach" to the Economy in Action? Conceptualising Social Enterprise as a Public Health "Intervention". *Rev. Soc. Econ.* **2017**, *75*, 89–111. [CrossRef]

34. Le Blanc, D. Towards Integration at Last? The Sustainable Development Goals as a Network of Targets. *Sustain. Dev.* **2015**, *23*, 176–187. [CrossRef]

35. Fukuda-Parr, S.; Hulme, D. International Norm Dynamics and the 'End of Poverty': Understanding the Millennium Development Goals. *Glob. Gov.* **2011**, *17*, 17–36. [CrossRef]

36. Bexell, M.; Jönsson, K. Responsibility and the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals. *Forum Dev. Stud.* **2017**, *44*, 13–29. [CrossRef]

37. McCollum, D.L.; Echeverri, L.G.; Busch, S.; Pachauri, S.; Parkinson, S.; Rogelj, J.; Krey, V.; Minx, J.C.; Nilsson, M.; Stevance, A.-S.; et al. Connecting the Sustainable Development Goals by Their Energy Inter-Linkages. *Environ. Res. Lett.* **2018**, *13*, 033006. [CrossRef]

38. Costanza, R.; Fioramonti, L.; Kubiszewski, I. The UN Sustainable Development Goals and the Dynamics of Well-Being. *Front. Ecol. Environ.* **2016**, *14*, 59. [CrossRef]

39. Rickels, W.; Dovern, J.; Hoffmann, J.; Quaas, M.F.; Schmidt, J.O.; Visbeck, M. Indicators for Monitoring Sustainable Development Goals: An Application to Oceanic Development in the European Union. *Earths Future* **2016**, *4*, 252–267. [CrossRef]

40. Siebold, N.; Gunzel-Jensen, F.; Mueller, S. Balancing Dual Missions for Social Venture Growth: A Comparative Case Study. *Entrep. Reg. Dev.* **2019**, *31*, 710–734. [CrossRef]

41. Singh, G.G.; Cisneros-Montemayor, A.M.; Swartz, W.; Cheung, W.; Guy, J.A.; Kenny, T.-A.; McOwen, C.J.; Asch, R.; Geffert, J.L.; Wabnitz, C.C.C.; et al. A Rapid Assessment of Co-Benefits and Trade-Offs among Sustainable Development Goals. *Mar. Policy* **2018**, *93*, 223–231. [CrossRef]

42. Thornton, P.H.; Ocasio, W. Institutional Logics and the Historical Contingency of Power in Organizations: Executive Succession in the Higher Education Publishing Industry, 1958–1990. *Am. J. Sociol.* **1999**, *105*, 801–843. [CrossRef]

43. Borzaga, C.; Defourny, J. *The Emergence of Social Enterprise*; Routledge: London, UK, 2001.

44. Bishop, S.; Waring, J. Becoming Hybrid: The Negotiated Order on the Front Line of Public-Private Partnerships. *Hum. Relat.* **2016**, *69*, 1937–1958. [CrossRef]

45. Boiral, O.; Cayer, M.; Baron, C.M. The Action Logics of Environmental Leadership: A Developmental Perspective. *J. Bus. Ethics* **2009**, *85*, 479–499. [CrossRef]

46. DiVito, L.; Bohnsack, R. Entrepreneurial Orientation and Its Effect on Sustainability Decision Tradeoffs: The Case of Sustainable Fashion Firms. *J. Bus. Ventur.* **2017**, *32*, 569–587. [CrossRef]

47. Hestad, D.; Tabara, D.J.; Thornton, T.F. Transcending Unsustainable Dichotomies in Management: Lessons from Sustainability-Oriented Hybrid Organisations in Barcelona. *J. Clean. Prod.* **2020**, *244*, 118766. [CrossRef]

48. Chandra, Y.; Man Lee, E.K.; Tjiptono, F. Public versus Private Interest in Social Entrepreneurship: Can One Serve Two Masters? *J. Clean. Prod.* **2021**, *280*, 124499. [CrossRef]

49. Spieth, P.; Schneider, S.; Clauss, T.; Eichenberg, D. Value Drivers of Social Businesses: A Business Model Perspective. *Long Range Plan.* **2019**, *52*, 427–444. [CrossRef]

50. Litrico, J.-B.; Besharov, M.L. Unpacking Variation in Hybrid Organizational Forms: Changing Models of Social Enterprise Among Nonprofits, 2000–2013. *J. Bus. Ethics* **2019**, *159*, 343–360. [CrossRef]

51. Vickers, I.; Lyon, F.; Sepulveda, L.; McMullin, C. Public Service Innovation and Multiple Institutional Logics: The Case of Hybrid Social Enterprise Providers of Health and Wellbeing. *Res. Policy* **2017**, *46*, 1755–1768. [CrossRef]

52. Gregori, P.; Wdowiak, M.A.; Schwarz, E.J.; Holzmann, P. Exploring Value Creation in Sustainable Entrepreneurship: Insights from the Institutional Logics Perspective and the Business Model Lens. *Sustainability* **2019**, *11*, 2505. [CrossRef]

53. Mair, J.; Mayer, J.; Lutz, E. Navigating Institutional Plurality: Organizational Governance in Hybrid Organizations. *Organ. Stud.* **2015**, *36*, 713. [CrossRef]
54. Chaves, R.; Monzón, J.L. Beyond the Crisis: The Social Economy, Prop of a New Model of Sustainable Economic Development. *Serv Bus.* **2012**, *6*, 5–26. [CrossRef]
55. Stubbs, W. Sustainable Entrepreneurship and B Corps. *Bus. Strategy Environ.* **2017**, *26*, 331–344. [CrossRef]
56. Somerville, P.; McElwee, G. Situating Community Enterprise: A Theoretical Exploration. *Entrep. Reg. Dev.* **2011**, *23*, 317–330. [CrossRef]
57. Wu, Y.C.; Wu, Y.J.; Wu, S.M. Development and Challenges of Social Enterprises in Taiwan—From the Perspective of Community Development. *Sustainability* **2018**, *10*, 1797. [CrossRef]
58. Knutsson, H.; Thomasson, A. Exploring Organisational Hybridity from a Learning Perspective. *Qual. Res. Account. Manag.* **2017**, *14*, 430–447. [CrossRef]
59. Alexius, S.; Grossi, G. Decoupling in the Age of Market-Embedded Morality: Responsible Gambling in a Hybrid Organization. *J. Manag. Gov.* **2018**, *22*, 285–313. [CrossRef]
60. Mazzei, M. Different Ways of Dealing with Tensions Practices of (Re) Negotiation in Local Social Economies. *Soc. Enterp. J.* **2017**, *13*, 299–314. [CrossRef]
61. Yin, J.; Chen, H. Dual-Goal Management in Social Enterprises: Evidence from China. *Manag. Decis.* **2019**, *58*, 1362–1381. [CrossRef]
62. Mason, C.; Doherty, B. A Fair Trade-off? Paradoxes in the Governance of Fair-Trade Social Enterprises. *J. Bus. Ethics* **2016**, *136*, 451–469. [CrossRef]
63. Jablonski, A. Scalability of Sustainable Business Models in Hybrid Organizations. *Sustainability* **2016**, *8*, 194. [CrossRef]
64. Mikołajczak, P. Social Enterprises' Hybridity in the Concept of Institutional Logics: Evidence from Polish NGOs. *Voluntas* **2020**, *31*, 472–483. [CrossRef]
65. Park, J.-H.; Bae, Z.-T. Legitimation of Social Enterprises as Hybrid Organizations. *Sustainability* **2020**, *12*, 7583. [CrossRef]
66. Bruneel, J.; Moray, N.; Stevens, R.; Fassin, Y. Balancing Competing Logics in For-Profit Social Enterprises: A Need for Hybrid Governance. *J. Soc. Entrep.* **2016**, *7*, 263–288. [CrossRef]
67. Howlett, M.P.; Saguin, K. Policy Capacity for Policy Integration: Implications for the Sustainable Development Goals. In *Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy Research Paper No. 18-06*; National University of Singapore: Singapore, 2018; Volume 23, pp. 176–187. [CrossRef]
68. Rosati, F.; Faria, L.G.D. Addressing the SDGs in Sustainability Reports: The Relationship with Institutional Factors. *J. Clean. Prod.* **2019**, *215*, 1312–1326. [CrossRef]
69. Salamon, L.M. Of Market Failure, Voluntary Failure, and Third-Party Government: Toward a Theory of Government-Nonprofit Relations in the Modern Welfare State. *J. Volunt. Action Res.* **1987**, *16*, 29–49. [CrossRef]
70. Bode, I. Disorganized Welfare Mixes: Voluntary Agencies and New Governance Regimes in Western Europe. *J. Eur. Soc. Policy* **2006**, *16*, 346–359. [CrossRef]
71. Bernstein, S. The Absence of Great Power Responsibility in Global Environmental Politics. *Eur. J. Int. Relat.* **2020**, *26*, 8–32. [CrossRef]
72. Bambra, C.; Fox, D.; Scott-Samuel, A. Towards a Politics of Health. *Health Promot. Int.* **2005**, *20*, 187–193. [CrossRef]