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## **Trends in the international sustainable development policy discourse: Compliance, collaboration or both?**

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# 1 Introduction

A long-running debate revolves around which forms of governance are optimally suited to realising sustainable development. Much of the relevant literature diverges on the relative merits of compliance-based governance, based mainly on governments' employment of hard policy tools, or collaborative forms of governance, where governments work mainly with softer approaches such as voluntary agreements and partnerships. More recently, this literature has converged on arguments that these two forms of governance are complements rather than substitutes. National governments can enable multi-stakeholder collaboration while at the same time mandating top-down compliance. This literature, however, often draws its conclusions from a limited selection of cases over short periods of time. Surveying a longer history of intergovernmental documents from milestone meetings and other high-level policy documents can help clarify whether international negotiations on sustainable development reflect the trend towards increasing complementarities between compliance and collaboration.

*International negotiations are increasingly encouraging governments to employ collaboration with various stakeholder groups*

This chapter employs a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods to shed light on these trends. The analysis demonstrates a steady increase in attention to compliance-based governance in key documents followed by a more recent and sharp uptick in references to collaborative governance. The chapter concludes that international negotiations are encouraging governments to employ collaboration with various stakeholder groups. As governments get ready to implement the SDGs they too will need to contemplate how expanding collaboration and partnerships with stakeholders can complement and enhance the effectiveness of conventional top-down planning and implementation. This could involve, for instance, providing non-governmental organisations (NGOs) with formal channels to shape the national SDG implementation plans, or review progress towards achieving development goals and targets. Capitalising on such potential complementarities between traditionally separate stakeholders promises to be particularly

important for capturing synergies and building multi-stakeholder alignment for action on the integrated and transformational development goals, not least for goals with cross-cutting elements such as water, energy and biodiversity that are featured in later chapters.

## 2 Tracing trends in sustainable development governance

Policymakers have promoted sustainable development as a response to human-caused global environmental degradation for decades. Realising a sustainable future has remained a formidable challenge over the same period. The recent negotiations over the SDGs have made the point clearly that implementing the SDGs will depend not merely on introducing new policies and sources of financing, but also on improving governance arrangements for decision-making on these issues (United Nations, 2014). The scholarly literature has also noted the importance of governance in improving policy action. A common theme in this literature is that governance is critical because it influences which actors exercise authority as well as the means through which they seek to achieve desired goals. A rough distinction can be made between governance for compliance and governance through collaboration.

*Realising a sustainable future has remained a formidable challenge*

Compliance was once portrayed as the overriding objective of governance due to its clear and immediate implications for implementing environmental agreements (Mastenbroek, 2005). Compliance involves two discrete but related concepts: implementation and effectiveness. Effectiveness refers to the degree to which policies solve the problem(s) they are formulated to remedy and thus often serves “as a valuable proxy for effectiveness” (ibid: 23). But compliance is only possible with mechanisms that elicit meaningful behavioural changes (Wettestad, 2001:317). For many years, compliance mechanisms consisted of administrative penalties and sanctions designed to encourage national governance to enforce policies intended to result in those changes. Over time, the types and design of mechanisms would expand to include other forms of technological, institutional, and financial incentives. These mechanisms, however, made “minimal progress on *implementation*,”

leading to a search for new approaches to governance (Humphreys, 2006: 99 - emphasis in the original; Zaelke, Durwood, Kainaru, & Kruzikova, 2005).

It was these discussions of new forms of governance that highlighted the importance of collaborating (Cadman, 2011, p. 22). Collaborative forms of governance involve more networked arrangements with a wider range of "civic and private sectors, as well as the state, in the development of policy responses" (ibid: 37). They also tend to promote more discursive and deliberative decision-making than top-down government led models. They further often favour combinations of different financial, technological and institutional means to achieve desired ends. In terms of the number of actors and the exercise of authority, collaborative forms of governance seemed to agree with sustainable development's more holistic and multi-dimensional view of development (Mackendrick, 2005, p. 22).

**Table 3.1 The distinguishing characteristics of two forms of governance**

Type of governance	Compliance	Collaboration
Exercise of authority	Unidirectional	Multidirectional
Main actors	National governments and international organisations	Multiple state and non-state entities
Means of implementation	Administrative penalties, financial and technological incentives	Combinations of financial technological, capacity building incentives

In contrast to the above, others have argued that collaborative and compliance forms of governance are complements not substitutes. This complementary view notes that collaboration enables multiple stakeholders to find a balance between 'soft' and 'hard' compliance mechanisms (Skjaereth, Stokke, & Wettestad, 2006, pp. 104–105). For instance, this may include stronger verification and review systems that backstop flexible goals. Voluntary regulation reinforced by robust regulatory and policy regimes offers another example of a possible combination of compliance and collaboration (Potoski & Prakash, 2005,

pp. 246–247). The proliferation of ‘co’ arrangements that are anchored by governments but engage non-state actors are yet a third illustration (Cadman, 2009, pp. 98–99). This includes the intentions of the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development (GPSD), arguably a central pillar of the post-2015 development agenda.

Viewed from one perspective, these two streams of compliance and collaborative governance literature appear to be making competing arguments. On the one hand, the compliance-based governance claims stress the unidirectional top-down exercise of authority with national governments and international organisations serving as the chief actors wielding a limited set of means to achieve “effective” outcomes. On the other, the collaborative governance claims tend to underline the multidirectional flows of authority with a wider variety of actors deliberating over what combinations of means can help achieve mutually agreeable outcomes. This perspective and the related descriptions in Table 3.1 make more of the differences than the similarities between these two streams of literature.

More nuanced views suggest that, in many cases, it is less about any single pure form of governance than identifying an ideal point on a continuum that runs from compliance to collaboration (Mackendrick, 2005; Skjaerseth et al., 2006). Though not stated explicitly in the literature, the location of that ideal point may

*It is often less about one particular governance-type over another, but rather about finding the right balance between the two*

depend upon the particular case at hand. Another such similarity is that, while much of the literature draws from empirical case studies, it also has decidedly normative orientation. Much of the literature implies which forms of governance ought to be pursued based on a review of a cross section of cases at a particular time and place in history (Andonova, Betsill, & Bulkeley, 2009; Baeckstrand, 2008; Cadman, 2009, 2011; Mackendrick, 2005; Potoski & Prakash, 2005; Skjaerseth et al., 2006) (see Table 3.2). Yet another parallel is that, due to the normative orientation and relatively selective pool of evidence, neither set of studies systematically examines how intergovernmental understandings of governance have moved along this possible continuum over time. The same set of literature that appears to be converging on the need for combining elements of both compliant and collaborative governance, offers a relatively limited view of what extent those calls appear in a broader cross section of evidence.

Table 3.2 Surveyed literature

Source	Evidence/Cases	Type of governance
Andonova, Betsill, & Bulkeley (2009)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Theory development based on case studies</li> </ul>	Public, private, hybrid forms of governance
Ansell & Gash (2008)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Case studies on collaborative governance, recognising the pivotal role of governments</li> </ul>	Collaboration
Baekstrand (2008)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Transnational climate governance through public-private partnerships</li> </ul>	Collaboration, hybrids
Birnie (2000)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>UN</li> </ul>	Lack of binding commitments
Cadman (2009)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Global forest management institutions</li> </ul>	Collaboration (participation, deliberation)
Cadman (2011)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Four forest management institutions</li> </ul>	Collaboration/ Voluntary approaches
Humphreys (2006)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reviews of international negotiations in the context of forest governance</li> </ul>	Compliance, collaboration
Mackendrick (2005)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Canadian case studies</li> </ul>	Collaboration/ Voluntary approaches
Mastenbroek (2005)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>EU compliance regimes</li> </ul>	Compliance

### Chapter 3 Trends in the international sustainable development policy discourse

Meuleman (2008)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Case studies of three EU countries and the European Commission</li></ul>	Meta-governance <sup>1</sup>
Lynn, Heinrich, & Hill (2002) Skjaerseth, Stokke, & Wettestad (2006)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Theory development based on case studies of soft and hard law and interplay between different institutions</li></ul>	Compliance, collaboration
Wettestad, (2001)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Institutional analysis of international regimes</li></ul>	Compliance
Zaelke, Durwood, Kainaru, & Kruzikova, (2005)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Theory on strengths and weaknesses of environmental compliance within legal systems</li></ul>	Compliance

To a significant extent, the above three commonalities are also limitations of the reviewed sustainable development governance literature. Yet these limitations open the possibility to analyse whether and to what extent different understandings of governance have appeared at the global level. In fact, from this juncture the chapter aims to examine how much the arguments about preferred forms of governance have appeared across a relatively long period of time. Three hypotheses emerge:

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<sup>1</sup> The author defines meta-governance as, “an approach aiming at combining and managing successful combinations of ideas from different governance styles”. See: <http://www.ps4sd.eu/index.php/en/themes/metagov>

- H1: References to governance will increase in key intergovernmental documents over time
- H2: References to compliance-based governance will increase in key intergovernmental documents over time
- H3: References to collaborative forms of governance will increase in key intergovernmental documents over time

### 3 Case selection and research methods

To examine the empirical evidence for these hypotheses the authors conducted a multi-step text analysis of nine milestone intergovernmental documents listed in Table 3.3. The documents were selected because they define the population of high-profile global texts on sustainable development. In examining these documents, the authors employed both a close-to-the-text qualitative assessment paired with a broader quantitative overview of trends. The main research steps are described in greater detail in Figure 3.1. As suggested in this figure, using a mixed qualitative and quantitative approach made it possible to select key terms that could serve as guideposts to trace broader empirical trends in the coverage of governance over time.

**Table 3.3 Summary of documents analysed**

Document	Summary
1972 Report of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment	For the first time, brings developed and developing nations from East and West together to draw attention to the increasing degradation of the environment and the role of international cooperation in addressing degradation.
1987 Brundtland Report, Our Common Future	Drafted by the independent World Commission for Environment and Development, this is a strong agenda setting document that officially defines sustainable development.



### Chapter 3 Trends in the international sustainable development policy discourse

1992 Agenda 21	A comprehensive and lengthy programme of work for sustainable development in the 21st century. The world's leaders approved it by consensus in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 1992.
1997 GA Resolution A/RES/S-19/2	Adopted in 1997 as a "...Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21".
2002 Johannesburg Plan of Implementation	Builds on the outcomes of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, Stockholm 1972, as well as the Rio Earth Summit. Multilateralism and partnerships were two areas of emphasis in this document.
2012 The Future We Want	The main outcome document of the Rio+20 Conference in Rio de Janeiro in 2012. It reaffirmed countries' commitments to sustainable development and focused on institutional reforms necessary for sustainable development. It also set the stage for development of the SDGs.
2013 High Level Experts Panel Report on Post-2015 Development Agenda	Refers to the 2013 non-negotiated report by a panel of experts on sustainable development that convened to provide inputs to the post-MDG era.
2014 Open Working Group Proposal for the Sustainable Development Goals	Held 13 open and inclusive meetings between 2013 and 2014 in which the main characteristics of the future SDGs were debated and agreed by tacit compromise among more than 70 member states of the UN. The OWG proposal contains 17 possible SDGs with 169 targets.
2015 The Road to Dignity by 2030: Ending Poverty, Transforming All Lives and Protecting the Planet. Synthesis Report of the Secretary-General	Came out in late 2014 and summarises the achievements of the preceding OWG with its proposed goals. It outlines a way to organise the 17 goals into key areas for the sake of communicability and emphasises the importance of governance and means of implementation.

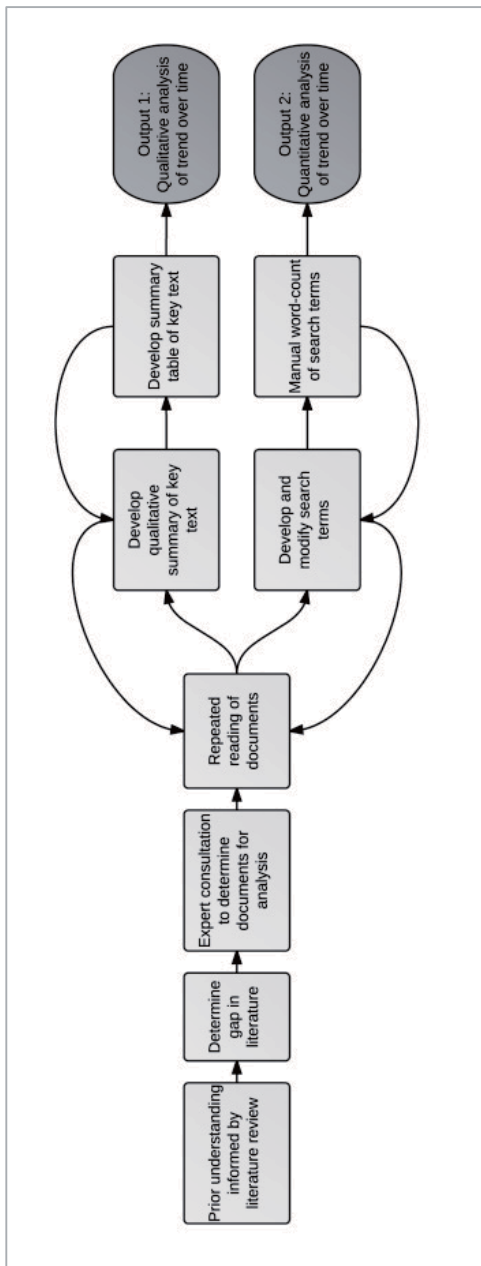


Figure 3.1 Research approach Source: Authors

## 3.1 Qualitative assessment

To operationalise the approach illustrated in Figure 3.1, the authors repeatedly read the nine documents to understand the trends related to the three hypotheses. Table 3.4 was then created to compile the result of a reading of the documents as Output 1 (see Figure 3.1). Before reviewing the trends, it is important to note some inconsistency in the categorisation of compliance and collaboration words. This is unfortunately unavoidable due to some degree of overlap between categories. These limitations notwithstanding, some interesting trends can be gleaned from Table 3.4 below.

Table 3.4 Key emphasis on compliance and collaboration over time

Document	Overall Assessment	
	Compliance	Collaboration
<b>UNCHE</b>	<p>Focuses on equity among nations and peoples; the role of education, research and development (both from national governments and multilateral organisations); and for integrated approaches to development planning. The outcome also emphasises the need for national institutions to be created to oversee management of natural resources. It further calls for states to cooperate on developing international law to assign liability and compensation for transboundary pollution. It also calls for a cooperative spirit and for international organisations to play a coordinated and efficient role.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National institutions to oversee the management of natural resources.</li> <li>• States to cooperate on developing international law assign liability and compensation for transboundary pollution.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Equity</li> <li>• Financial and technical assistance</li> <li>• Integrated approaches to development planning</li> <li>• States to cooperate on developing international law and to assign liability and compensation for transboundary pollution</li> <li>• Cooperative spirit and for international organisations to play a coordinated and efficient role</li> </ul>
<b>Brundtland Report</b>	<p>Emphasises the shared global dimensions of development, cooperation and partnerships among developed and developing nations as well as countries from the East and the West. It calls for institutional change for integration of environment and development concerns and also the need for popular participation. It further reminds countries of the responsibilities of international financial institutions and international businesses. It states the need for capacity to deal with environmental issues and to fill gaps in national and international law related to the environment.</p>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Responsibilities of international financial institutions and international businesses issues</li> <li>● Nations to fill gaps in national and international environment law</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Cooperation and partnerships</li> <li>● Institutional change towards integration of environment and development concerns</li> </ul>
<b>Agenda 21</b>	<p>Highlights international, national, and local information exchanges; integration across sectors; and networks among science and businesses. It also emphasises collaboration on technology; establishing institutional frameworks for increased coherence; laws, regulations, rules, standards and incentives; and the enforcement of agreements. It further underlines the importance of data; research for tracking development; and five main MOI, including the roles of science, technology transfer, education, international institutions and financial mechanisms.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Laws, rules and regulations</li> <li>● Enforcement</li> <li>● Standards and incentives</li> <li>● Data and research</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● International, national, and local levels</li> <li>● Information exchange</li> <li>● Integration among sectors</li> <li>● Networks including business and science</li> </ul>
<b>GA Resolution A/RES/S-19/2</b>	<p>Highlights regional coordination among actors and the importance of finance epitomised by the International Monetary Fund and World Bank. It further points to the importance of information and communications technologies; and the roles of the United Nations and other international organisations. It also mentions regulations and commitments in a general manner and the keys from Agenda 21.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Regulations</li> <li>● Commitments</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Coordination among actors</li> <li>● Information and communication technologies</li> </ul>
<b>JPoI</b>	<p>Stresses coherence between different scales of governance and reiterated the importance of science, technology and networks. It further highlights the need for partnerships involving the stakeholders and the private sector, actors such as UN, IFIs, and IOs, the role of natural and social science as well as emphasising the importance of research and development. With regards to compliance, it highlighted impact assessments, compliance with trade agreements as well as laws on fundamental access to information.</p>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Montreal Protocol (as example of compliance)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Science and technology</li> <li>● Partnerships</li> <li>● Networks</li> <li>● Stakeholders and corporations</li> <li>● Research and development</li> </ul>
<p><b>TFWW</b></p>	<p>Emphasises international level action, science and research; and the importance of access to information as well as the role of statistical offices in tracking progress. More conceptually, it highlights the role of innovation, technology, and data. It further references the importance of certification for private sector as well as the need to curb illicit flows of money. It also points to the importance of partnerships and cooperation on finance, science and particular issue areas like health and energy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Monitoring</li> <li>● Control</li> <li>● Surveillance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● National, regional, and international</li> <li>● Academia, science and technology</li> <li>● Best practices</li> <li>● Information sharing</li> <li>● Partnerships Research</li> <li>● Government and UN</li> </ul>
<p><b>HLP</b></p>	<p>Emphasises all levels of governance and coherence among them, the roles of science, technology and research. References monitoring, control and surveillance.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Certification</li> <li>● Business</li> <li>● Illicit financial flows</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Science</li> <li>● Information</li> <li>● Research</li> <li>● Statistical Offices</li> <li>● National agencies</li> <li>● Innovation</li> <li>● Technology</li> <li>● Development data</li> </ul>

<p><b>OWG</b></p>	<p>Contains approximately 74 targets that relate broadly to governance or implementation; 19 of the targets are under Goal 17—a goal that focuses exclusively on MOI—while most of the remaining 55 targets are listed as enabling targets for the other 16 goals. The OWG organises MOI (Goal 17) into seven clusters: (i) trade; (ii) finance; (iii) technology; (iv) capacity building; (v) policy and institutional coherence; (vi) multi-stakeholder partnerships, and (vii) data, monitoring and accountability. It also embeds enabling targets throughout all the SDGs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● N/A</li> </ul>
<p><b>SGs Report</b></p>	<p>Refers to governance 12 times and includes two out of five sections on implementation. It also suggests the value of volunteerism and collaboration elements.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Global</li> <li>● Cooperate</li> <li>● Partnership</li> <li>● Multi-stakeholder</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● N/A</li> <li>● Innovation</li> <li>● Participation</li> <li>● Inclusiveness</li> <li>● Cooperation</li> <li>● Partnerships</li> </ul>

First, over time there is a generally greater emphasis on governance. Second, compliance-based governance words such as regulations, laws and rules receive less of an emphasis over time. Third, collaborative governance words such as partnerships; information, research, capacity and others receive greater emphasis over time. In short, the qualitative review of the documents seems to support the three main hypotheses.

*Collaborative governance words that focus on partnerships; information, research, capacity and others receive greater emphasis over time*

While this first step qualitative analysis of how these documents treat different forms of governance yielded interesting results, it was at times difficult to survey changes due to the myriad of details in the documents. Even with the simplifying summaries in Table 3.4, it can be challenging to see the bigger picture when looking across these documents. To get a broader vantage point, a second quantitative element was added to the analysis.

## 3.2 Quantitative assessment

Building on the above readings, the authors identified sets of key words relating to (i) compliance (11 key words), (ii) collaboration (17 words), and (iii) words that relate to implementation (19 words). The words that were selected contain (and build on) the governance framework for compliance and collaboration-based governance from one of the works in the literature review (Cadman, 2009) (See Annex 1 for a list of the key words). This framework is, however, elaborated by additional search words related to governance that emerged through the repeated reading of the documents as well as discussions with experts. The applied search terms are an 'approximation' of what the authors believe characterises compliance and collaboration.

In the quantitative step, manual human coding was used to count the occurrence of the search terms in the documents. As other research has argued, text analysis can be imperfect, especially in attempting to deduce the true positions of political actors (Klemmensen, Hobolt, & Hansen, 2007; Laver & Garry, 2000, p. 2). Thus, neither automated or manual word counting would replace repeated reading in conducting text-analysis (Benoit, Laver, & Mikhaylov, 2009). Reading is the only way to gain an



understanding of the overall meaning and underlining message of the text.

At the same time, quantitative text analysis has been used in several policy-related contexts where it is useful to trace trends over time, perhaps most notably in the Comparative Manifestos Project (CMP) for “expert coding of party manifestos” where it “represents a core source of information about the policy positions of political actors” (Laver & Garry, 2000, p. 1). While this form of analysis used to be a time- and labour-intensive process, the development of software and digital text has eased the burden greatly.

For the quantitative text analysis the authors searched mostly for unigrams (single words), and in some cases also bigrams and trigrams (compound-words). To execute the word count, the authors included different grammatical tenses of the search terms. In some cases, the authors also ‘lemmatized’ or reduced a word to its most basic form to discover all different versions in the text.

*‘Governance’ in the documents has increased markedly over time*

When counting the occurrence of specific words, the authors represent text as data to establish ‘term frequency’.

For the manual word count in the second step of this analysis, a few general patterns stand out. First, the term frequency of ‘governance’ in the documents has increased markedly over time, starting at a low point of zero in 1972 to 0.085% in 2014 – this is a significant increase.

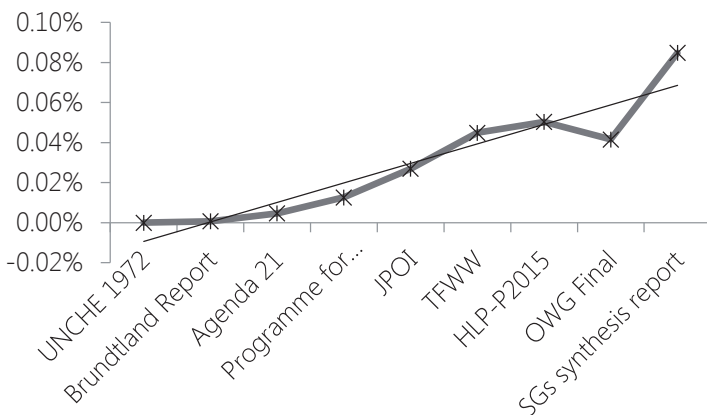


Figure 3.2 Frequency of the term “governance” over time

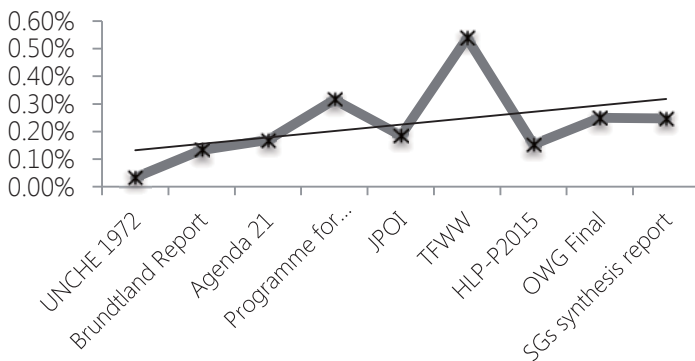


Figure 3.3 Frequency of references to compliance-based governance over time

Next, the development of compliance-focused key words in the reviewed documents is shown. Figure 3.3 demonstrates that there was a spike in compliance-based governance words in the Rio+20 outcome document to nearly 0.54% representation; this is proportional to the total word count. However, the main trend of compliance-based governance key

words increased more gradually from almost zero to over 0.2% between 1972 and 2014. The words causing this increase are 'legal' and 'commit'. The deviation around Rio+20 is caused mainly by the key-word 'commit', and when re-reading the Rio+20 outcome document two caveats become clear: 1) that governments have used this word primarily to reaffirm their political commitment to implement earlier agreements on development and sustainability - especially those that have not been implemented; and 2) that commitments do not necessarily only refer to binding and compliance-based governance, but are ambiguous and can refer to commitments to voluntary collaboration-based governance arrangements.

Strong compliance key words, such as 'mandatory', 'binding', or 'enforce' do not appear. The same goes for punitive compliance words such as 'sanction', 'fine' or 'punish'. This is not surprising, given the lack of sovereign authority of any organisation at the international level to date.

When looking at the softer key words for collaborative types of governance, the analysis shows that the most frequently mentioned words are 'partnership', 'cooperation' and 'participation'. With regards to frequency over time, collaborative governance-type words increase from just above 0.2% occurrence in 1972 to almost 1.1% in the recent synthesis report of the UNSG.

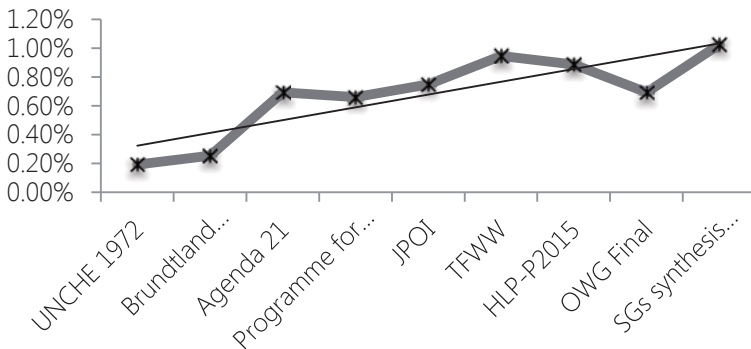


Figure 3.4 Frequency of references to collaborative governance over time

In addition, key words that could indicate effectiveness of governance outcomes such as 'dispute settlement', 'problem solving', 'behavioural change' and 'dispute resolution' (Cadman, 2009), do not occur very often in the analysed documents. It would be more encouraging if these stronger compliance-related words occurred more frequently, even if only referring to what governments should do at national levels. In this regard, the box below will make some suggestions as to how existing subnational initiatives and their collaborative partnerships can help bring the sustainable development agenda down to the local level.

## The significance of local solutions for the SDGs

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Much like Agenda 21 spurred significant activity at the local level, the SDGs will have to be contextualised to fit specific local realities. But the SDGs agenda will not fall into a vacuum at subnational levels, because a large number of cities and municipalities are already trying to become more sustainable. Approaches to local sustainability show great diversity as reflected by the diversity of concepts used to connote sustainability, such as 'green growth', 'eco-cities', 'low carbon city', 'model cities', 'green cities', 'local MDGs', 'resilient cities'. However, since the concept of sustainability is very multi-faceted there is no universally accepted framework for a 'sustainable city'. Efforts to bring clarity on what characterises sustainability at local levels has given rise to a rich discussion involving a wide range of academic disciplines. (Andersson & Ostrom, 2008; Bithas & Christofakis, 2006; Blassingame, 1998; Egger, 2006; Pickett, Cadenasso, & Grove, 2004).

The interest among international donors and development agencies in supporting sustainable development at the local level through capacity building and technical assistance, including through the transfer of policy experiences and practices through city-to-city twinning arrangements, is growing (ICLEI, 2012). Furthermore, inter-city cooperation is also increasingly embraced by city governments in economically advanced countries, such as for example Kitakyushu and Yokohama in Japan (Nakamura, 2010).

The SDGs are likely to stimulate such national and international efforts to pursue sustainability locally. More specifically, interpreting the SDGs locally could become a part of a unifying framework for sustainable

development at subnational levels, not only because there is a cities goal (SDG 11), but also because many development issues will have to be implemented locally. Existing networks and initiatives could help bring momentum to the SDGs at subnational levels, incorporating specific targets and indicators of the SDGs framework into their action plans and programmes, where relevant. This local response to the global goals would be important, because achieving the goals locally will require creative forms of collaboration among stakeholders from government, private sector and civil society. Platforms for such collaboration already exist through city level initiatives.

Actions at the local level can be facilitated or constrained by national regulations and policies. National governments therefore have a responsibility to create a supportive environment for sustainable development at local levels. Providing frontrunner local administrations with the freedom and resources to innovate and experiment, to put pressure on the laggards, and to try to increase the level of ambition across the board, can be instrumental in this regard.

## 4 Discussion and way forward

The post-2015 development agenda is expected to be transformative, integrated and universal. Living up to that ambition requires a change in the way different actors approach development, from pursuing competing short-term interests to striving for longer-term common interests. This means, among other things, that implementing the new global agenda requires collaboration and partnerships among many and diverse stakeholders, in addition to governmental leadership, command-and-control and compliance.

The literature reviewed in this chapter emphasises the importance of more collaborative types of governance—with more nuanced views suggesting complementarities with traditional compliance-based governance. These conclusions are mostly based on case studies in particular policy areas, regions and periods of time. It has not yet been empirically analysed to what extent intergovernmental reports and negotiated documents on sustainability at the international level reflect the shift in emphasis over time from mainly compliance-based governance to more collaborative and hybrid forms of governance. The chapter helps to fill this gap by showing that over the last four decades

governance, and especially collaborative forms of governance, are becoming more pronounced features of the sustainable development discourse at the intergovernmental level.

The trends illustrated here show the evolution in how national governments and the UN system understand governance. The chapter has thus far eschewed discussing what is causing these trends or trying to interpret what they may imply for governance in the post-2015 era. In this section the authors offer some possible and speculative interpretations.

The analysis presented in previous sections suggests that the older and narrower view of governance being mainly about governments' use of command-and-control measures is gradually shifting to a broader view that includes collaboration in addition to compliance. This broadening can be understood in different ways. There are two main interpretations: that collaborative forms of governance, or hybrid forms combining compliance and collaboration, have indeed been found to be more effective, or that national governments have come to realise that they are actually less in command of what happens in their countries than is often assumed. Arguing against the first interpretation is that if collaborative or hybrid governance is in fact more effective, and if governments have increasingly adopted such approaches, more progress would have been seen in the implementation of international agreements. But as noted earlier in this chapter, there is still a huge and widely recognised implementation gap, which indicates shortcomings in government effectiveness (Chapter 2). There is perhaps more support for the second and less positive interpretation, and the process of globalisation, which has accelerated over the last few decades, has likely contributed to further weaken the authority of governments. Under such circumstances, governments that are engaged in international negotiations may find it easier to agree on soft forms of cooperation that arguably have less direct implication for accountability than concrete legal measures which have been seen to go nowhere at the international level.

*Governments engaged in international negotiations may find it easier to agree on soft forms of cooperation that arguably have less direct implications for accountability than concrete legal measures*

*It is worth considering what kinds of capacities can help facilitate the collaboration among diverse stakeholders*

For the future SDGs, and for establishing relevant targets and policy directions nationally, collaboration among stakeholders and efforts to align diverse interests will surely be important. However, incentives for action may be too weak without active governmental orchestration and also without the

possibility of compliance-based policy measures.

Based on the findings of the current study, and reflecting its limitations, the authors have identified five areas for further research.

First, the change of emphasis on governance has been traced at the level of intergovernmental texts but studies have not been done on whether governance at the national level reflects a similar trend. Subsequent research could study trends in governance at this level, and differences and similarities among countries and country groups. If national trends are found to differ from those that have been observed at the global level in the current study, follow-up research could seek to explain such differences.

Such an exercise will be important for identifying relevant SDG targets and action plans at national and local levels. Some have rightfully questioned whether documents from the United Nations agenda have 'real' roots (Hajer et al., 2015; United Nations, 2014). To trace if this positive trend at the level of intergovernmental agenda setting has an effect in countries, there needs to be a follow-up at national levels with comparative case studies to investigate whether the increase in emphasis on governance at the intergovernmental correlates with similar patterns at national level policy agenda setting.

Second, a related topic pertaining to collaborative types of governance at the national level is whether countries are institutionally prepared to use collaborative governance mechanisms to translate aspirational SDGs into relevant national targets and actions. It is worth considering what kinds of capacities can help facilitate the collaboration among stakeholders and enable partnerships among such diverse stakeholders.

Third, the research findings are based on empirical analysis of a limited number of documents. It may be fruitful to cast the net wider to include a larger number of documents from other forums. In this regard, it would

be equally interesting to carry out explorations on how the trend of civil society engagement has shifted over time, and which statements regarding collaborative governance have been made by whom. This would involve a more detailed mapping of the emerging discourse at the intergovernmental level and could help shed some light on whether governments increasingly use collaborative governance text in their outcome documents as part of real intent or just as lip-service to assuage NGO pressure.

Fourth, the present study does not distinguish between different kinds of collaboration and stakeholder involvement. Whether an increase of collaborative governance means increasing participation of civil society in government decision making or more public-private partnerships, is likely to affect sustainability outcomes. Follow-up studies of changes in governance over time should pay more attention to this aspect.

Lastly, the underlying assumption in this chapter has been that a broader conceptualisation of governance with processes to create trust and rapport among different stakeholders will create broader ownership of sustainable development objectives, which subsequently will strengthen implementation. The authors believe that to be true, but such assumption would have to be revisited and examined in detail when national level implementation of the new development goals begins.

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