

IGES Working Paper

Governance Trends in the Intergovernmental Sustainable Development Discourse: A Text Analysis

Simon Hoiberg Olsen,
Eric Zusman,
Magnus Bengtsson,
Tim Cadman*,
Ikuho Miyazawa

Abstract:

The international policy community has promoted sustainable development as a response to human-caused global environmental degradation for over four decades. Implementation barriers have nonetheless frustrated efforts to achieve a more sustainable future. A large body of literature holds that complementing top-down compliance-based governance with more collaborative forms of governance can help overcome these barriers. However, this literature often has a strong normative bent and draws from a limited number of case studies over a relatively short period of time. While there is a long empirical track record of important outcome documents from key sustainable development meetings, extracting patterns from their coverage of governance and related means of implementation (MOI) (finance, technology, and capacity) can prove challenging. This paper uses a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods to assess whether and to what extent governance (both compliance and collaborative forms) as well as related MOI appear in nine key documents from 1972 to 2015. The analysis shows a sharp increase in references to governance in general; a gradual increase of references to compliance-based governance; a steady increase in text on collaborative governance; and a sharp increase in text related to MOI. A possible interpretation of these trends is that collaborative forms of governance are increasingly complementing the preexisting government-centered views of governance. Additional research would be needed to examine not only if similar trends can be found at national levels, but more importantly whether collaborative forms of governance produce better outcomes or whether the increasing emphasis at intergovernmental levels are mere lip service to non-state pressure.

Keywords: Sustainable Development Goals; post-2015 development agenda; means of implementation; governance; collaboration; compliance

* Key Centre for Ethics, Law, Justice and Governance and the Institute for Ethics, Governance and Law at Griffith University, Queensland, Australia.

1 Introduction

Since the United Nations Conference on Human Environment (UNCHE) was convened in Stockholm, Sweden in 1972, the international community has been advocating an approach to development that is oriented toward living within planetary boundaries. But over the same four decades, translating sustainable development from this ideal into action has remained a formidable challenge. Just how formidable was underlined yet again by the 17 possible goals proposed by the Open Working Group (OWG) on the Sustainable Development Goals, which included two goals that stressed the need for governance and means of implementation (MOI) to help turn an aspirational vision into an actionable post-2015 development agenda. The United Nations Secretary-General (UN SG) made the argument even clearer: multiple references note that implementing the SDGs will hinge upon governance and MOI (United Nations, 2014).

Not surprisingly, governance has also found a prominent place in a growing body of scholarly literature. A point of convergence in the literature is that complementing top-down *compliance-based* governance with more *collaborative* forms of governance can help strengthen implementation of policies and measures required for a more sustainable future. However, much of this literature has a strong normative bent and draws from a limited number of case studies over a relatively short period of time. While there is a longer empirical track record of important intergovernmental outcome documents from milestone sustainable development meetings, it is difficult to discern broader patterns when reviewing their coverage of governance and related references to the finance, technology and capacity building that collectively make up the main categories of MOI.

This paper uses a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods to distill whether and to what extent governance (both compliance and collaborative forms) and MOI appear in the main sustainable development documents from 1972 to 2015. The analysis shows a sharp increase in references to governance in general; a gradual increase of references to compliance-based governance; a higher occurrence and steady increase in text related to collaborative governance; and a sharp increase in text related to MOI. While care should be taken in extrapolating from these results, one possible interpretation is that collaborative forms of governance are gradually complementing government-centered types of governance. Additional research could prove constructive on whether similar trends can be found at national levels, whether collaboration at the national level produces better outcomes, and which actors are calling for different forms of governance.

The remainder of the paper is organised as follows. After the introduction, the next section reviews trends in the literature on both compliance-based and collaborative forms of

governance. The third section presents hypotheses, research methods and results. The fourth section discusses findings in the context of existing literature and presents some recommendations for subsequent research.

2 Two perspectives on governance

More than two decades ago, the World Bank (1992) defined governance as “...the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country’s economic and social resources for development.” Over the past two decades, both policymakers and researchers have observed that governance or the way that authority is exercised can shape the trajectory of development. The extent to which governance influences this trajectory is most visibly illustrated by some experts who opine that governance is the fourth dimension of sustainable development—the other three being the economic, social, and environmental dimensions (Sachs 2012). Governance, this line of reasoning holds, is critical because it influences both which actors exercise authority and also through what means they aim to implement their goals. But over the past two decades there has been a notable shift in the range of actors and MOI in different forms of governance. An admittedly rough distinction can be made between governance aimed at compliance and governance fostered through collaboration.

2.1 Governance for Compliance

Compliance was once seen as an essential property of governance due to its clear and immediate implications for the implementation of international environmental agreements (Mastenbroek 2005: 1103-1120). Compliance arises from two connected—but discrete—concepts: implementation and effectiveness. For governments, effectiveness refers to the degree to which policies solved the problem(s) they were intended to correct (ibid). Compliance in this context can serve “as a valuable proxy for effectiveness” (ibid: 23). But compliance is only possible with mechanisms that elicit meaningful behavioral changes (Wettestad 2001: 317). For many years, the mechanisms that could induce those changes tended to employ a few narrowly crafted administrative penalties for non-compliance and limited financial and technological inducements for following through with agreed provisions. This stands in some contrast to voluntary approaches that encourage but do not mandate compliance, leading some to conclude that managing non-compliant entities is difficult under more flexible voluntary approaches (May 2005: 32).

This difficulty is arguably most evident when it comes to the power of international agreements and organisations to effect and sustain meaningful change. For decades, the UN

system has been much maligned for making “minimal progress on *implementation* [because] the question of compliance has never arisen, since ... proposals do not actually *oblige* the states to do anything” (Humphreys 2006: 99 – emphasis in the original). With increasing regularity, observers pointed to implementation gaps that open and widen as governments “put...commitments into practice” (Zaelke et al. 2005: 3-4). The absence of compliance with collectively binding decisions has led some to question the legitimacy of intergovernmental governance itself (Kjaer 2006).

Arguably due to these implementation gaps, a slightly more nuanced approach to compliance has begun to emerge reflecting a distinction between ‘soft’ and ‘hard’ compliance mechanisms (Skjaerseth, Stokke and Wettestad 2006: 104-105). Some literature contends that the ‘harder’ the mechanisms, the greater the likelihood that negotiations will strengthen means and compliance as an *end* of implementation. In contrast, ‘soft’ methods tend to be inherently more supple vehicles of change. Yet these ‘softer’ approaches can be accompanied by harder mechanisms that, in turn, could reinforce their more flexible counterparts. This could include, for example, more intrusive verification and review systems that backstop flexible goals (ibid 119). Taking this complementarity view a step further, some note that voluntary regulation in and of itself is not enough but can function effectively when reinforced by robust regulatory and policy regimes (Potoski and Prakash: 2004: 246-247).

2.2 Governance through Collaboration

It is no stretch to claim that compliance has been the Achilles’ heel of international governance. Due to the lack of an accepted body with executive power at the international level, there is no institution that can wield power beyond that of sovereign nations; hence calls for action at the international level often face insurmountable collective action problems. The 500 Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) that exist today and the continuing sustainability crisis cast these claims into sharp relief. Normative judgments on what types of governance are needed for action are thus increasing. The importance of collaborating with multiple actors and employing multiple means has gained attention as a tractable approach to address different forms of environmental degradation (Cadman 2011: 27).

Sustainable development, and its inherently holistic view of development, places even greater emphasis on collaboration as “the [need for] coordination of interdependent social relations in the mitigation of environmental disruptions, on account of the involvement of the civic and private sectors, as well as the state, in the development of policy responses” (Mackendrick 2005: 22). The rise of the collaborative approach to environmental problem solving has engendered a wide range of conferences, roundtables, dialogues and other forums. These meetings have provided a platform to elevate the expanded role of governments,

intergovernmental organisations (IGOs), non-governmental organisations (NGOs), UN bodies, and a range of private interests (Birnie 2000: 336-350). Indeed, in the post-Rio world of ‘new’ governance, collaborative forms of governance that involve more actors than traditional state-based bureaucratic modes of governing are becoming increasingly visible (Cadman 2011: 37). The process of decision-making accompanying this trend is also more discursive, as it encourages greater deliberation over both problems and solutions than previous compliance-driven approaches.

For some observers, however, collaborative and compliance forms of governance may be more complements than substitutes. To some extent this is because the state is still ‘in charge’ in global policymaking and the regimes under which rules are made (Andonova, Betsill and Bulkeley 2009: 57-58; Mackendrick 2005). Moreover, even if there were a shift from government-led top-down models to multifaceted networked arrangements, national governments still play a pivotal role in implementing global agendas such as the SDGs. The distinction is the state now shares its power in the proliferation of ‘co’ arrangements (Cadman 2009: 98-99). Notable examples of these power sharing arrangements include private public partnerships (PPPs) (Bäckstrand 2008: 76) not to mention the increased emphasis on Global Partnership(s) for Sustainable Development (GPSD)—a central pillar of the post-2015 development agenda¹.

2.3 Summarising the literature

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 tend to stress the unidirectional top-down exercise of authority with national governments and international organisations serving as the chief actors wielding a limited set of MOI to achieve “effective” outcomes. On the other, the collaborative-motivated governance claims tend to underline the multidirectional flows of authority with a wider variety of actors at various levels deliberating over what combinations of MOI can help achieve mutually agreeable outcomes. It is nonetheless important to point out that the above characterisation and the related descriptions in Table 1 make more of the differences than the similarities between these two streams of literature.

¹ The plural “s” in partnerships denotes the emphasis in the discussions on the GPSD that it should not be merely a single ‘governmental’ partnership but that a plethora of different partnerships among different state and non-state stakeholders will be necessary to aid implementation of the post-2015 development agenda.

Table 1. Two types of governance and their main characteristics

Type of governance/Main elements	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

Three such parallels merit particular attention. The first is that, as suggested by the more nuanced views, 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 (May 2005; Skjaereth et al. 2006; Mackendrick 2005). Though not stated explicitly in the literature, the location of that ideal point may depend upon the case study that constitutes the evidentiary basis for the claims. The second 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 (May 2005; Skjaereth et al. 2006; Potoski and Prakash 2005; Cadman 2009 and 2011; Mackendrick 2005; Baeckstrand 2008; and Betsill et al. 2009) (see Table 2). The third such 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 2. Evidence from surveyed literature

Source	Evidence/Cases	Category
Lynn, Heinrich, and Hill. (2001)	• Public management and governance	Compliance and collaboration hybrid
Ansell and Gash (2008)	• Case studies on collaborative governance, recognising pivotal role of governments	Collaboration
Meuleman (2008)	• Case studies of three EU countries and the European Commission	Meta-governance*
Mastenbroek (2005)	• EU compliance regimes	Compliance
Wettestad et al. (2001)	• Institutional analysis of international regimes	Compliance

May (2005)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case studies on traditional regulatory and voluntary approaches 	Compliance and/or facilitation, are not mutually exclusive
Humphreys (2006)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviews of international negotiations in the context of forest governance 	Compliance, collaboration
Zaelke et al. (2005)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theory on strengths and weaknesses of environmental compliance within legal systems. 	Compliance
Skjaereth et al. (2006)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theory development based on case studies of soft and hard law and interplay between different institutions 	Compliance, collaboration
Potoski and Prakash (2005)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case studies of 3,700 US facilities 	Collaboration
Cadman (2011)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Four forest management institutions 	Collaboration/ Voluntary approaches
Mackendrick (2005)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Canadian case studies 	Collaboration/ Voluntary approaches
Birnie (2000)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UN 	Lack of binding commitments
Cadman (2009)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Global forest management institutions 	Collaboration (participation, deliberation)
Bäckstrand (2008)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transnational climate governance through public-private partnerships 	Collaboration, hybrids
Andonova, Betsill and Bulkeley (2009)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theory development based on case studies 	Public, private, hybrid forms of governance

* 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>

To a significant extent, the above three commonalities are also limitations of the reviewed sustainable development governance literature. Yet these limitations often open the possibility to analyse whether and to what extent different understandings of governance have appeared over time at the global level. In fact, from this juncture the study aims to examine how much some of the arguments about preferred forms of governance have appeared across a relatively long period of time at the intergovernmental level. Underpinning this examination are three empirical expectations or hypotheses.

H₁: References to governance and MOI 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

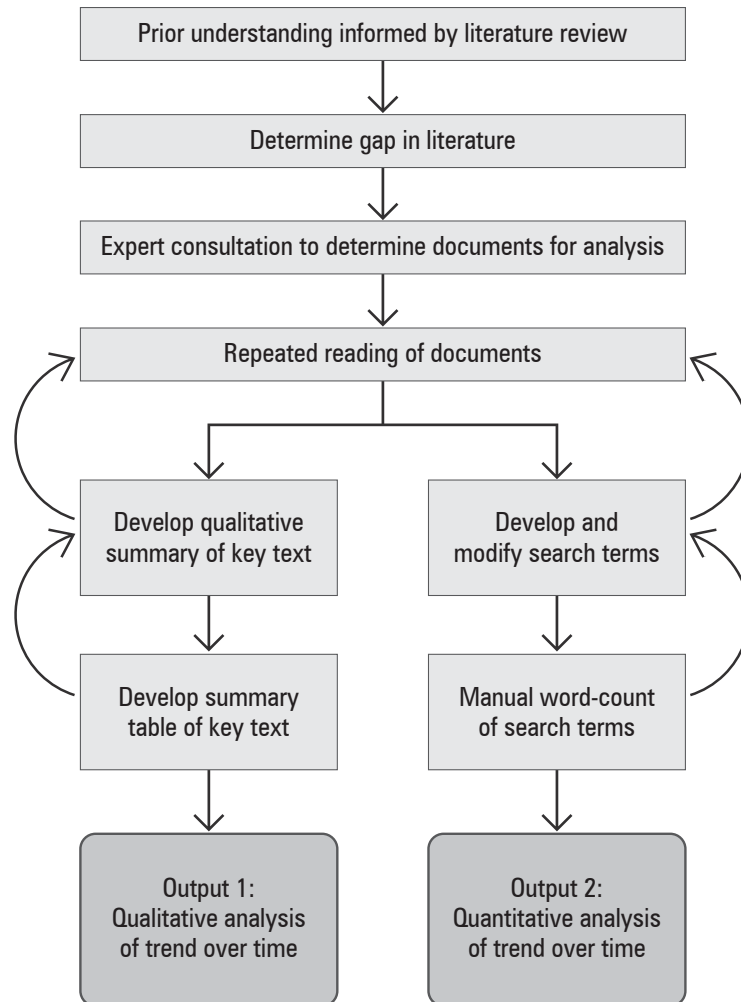
3 Case Selection and Research Methods

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. These documents were selected because they effectively define the population of high-profile global texts on sustainable development since the landmark UNCHE 1972 meeting. 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 1. As suggested by that 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 and MOI over time.

Table 3. Summary of Key Documents

Document	Summary
The Stockholm 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.
The 1987 Brundtland Report	Drafted by the independent World Commission for Environment and Development, this is a strong agenda setting document that officially defines sustainable development.
Agenda 21	A comprehensive, more than 350 pages long 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.
GA Resolution A/RES/S-19/2	Adopted in 1997 as a "...Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21".
JPol	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
TFWW	The main outcome document of the Rio + 20 Conference in Rio de Janeiro 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.
HLP	Refers to the 2013 non-negotiated report by a panel of experts on sustainable development that got together to devise possible inputs to the post-MDG era. Partnerships were a cornerstone of the report.
OWG	Held 13 open and inclusive meetings between 2013 and 2014 in which the main characteristics of the future SDGs were debated and agreed based on a tacit compromise among more than 70 member states of the UN. The OWG proposal contains 17 possible SDGs with 169 targets.
SGs Report	Came out in late 2014 and summarises the achievements of the preceding OWG with its proposed goals. It proposes a way to organise the 17 goals into key areas for sake of communicability and emphasises the importance of governance and means of implementation.

Figure 4. Research Approach



3.1 Qualitative Assessment

To operationalise the approach illustrated in Figure 4, the authors repeatedly read the nine documents to understand the trend over time related to the three hypotheses. Table 5 was then created to compile the result of a reading of the documents as output 1 (see Figure 4). Before reviewing the trends, it is important to note some inconsistency in the categorisation of words in compliance, collaboration, and MOI. This is unfortunately unavoidable due to some degree of overlap between MOI and the compliance and collaboration categories. These limitations notwithstanding, some interesting trends can be gleaned from Table 5 below.

Table 5. Key emphasis on MOI, compliance and collaboration over time

Document	Overall Assessment		
	Compliance	Collaboration	MOI
UNCHE	<p>Focuses on equity among nations and peoples, the need for financial and technical assistance, for greater focus on the role of education, research and development both national and multilateral, and for integrated approaches to development planning. The outcome also emphasised the need for national institutions to be created to oversee management of natural resources. It called for states to cooperate on developing international law for liability and compensation for endured pollution. It also called for a cooperative spirit, on equal footing and for IOs to play a coordinated and efficient role.</p>		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National institutions to oversee management of natural resources. States to cooperate on developing international law for liability and compensation for endured pollution. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Equity Financial and technical assistance Integrated approaches to development planning States to cooperate on developing international law for liability and compensation for endured pollution. Cooperative spirit, on equal footing and for IOs to play a coordinated and efficient role 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Role of Education, Research and development
Brundtland Report	<p>Emphasises the common and global aspect of development, cooperation and partnerships among developed and developing nations, from the East and the West. It called for institutional change towards integration of environment and development concerns and also the need for popular participation and reminded of the responsibilities of the IFIs and international businesses. It stated 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"> Responsibilities of the IFIs and international businesses issues, Nations to fill gaps in national and international law related to the environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cooperation and partnerships Institutional change towards integration of environment and development concerns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capacity to deal with environmental issues
Agenda 21	<p>Highlights international, national, and local information exchange, integration among sectors, establishing networks among science and businesses. It emphasised collaboration on technology, establishing institutional frameworks for increased coherence, emphasised laws, regulations, rules, standards and incentives, and the enforcement of agreements. It highlighted importance of data, research for tracking development and dedicated five main areas of means of implementation, including the roles of science, technology transfer, education, international institutions and financial mechanisms.</p>		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Laws, rules and regulations Enforcement Standards and incentives Data, research 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> International, national, local levels Information exchange Integration among sectors Networks including business and science 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial mechanisms Technology transfer International institutions Role of science Education

<p>GA Resolution A/RES/S-19/2</p>	<p>Highlights regional coordination among actors, the importance of finance epitomised by the IMF and World Bank. The importance of information and communications technologies, and of course roles of the UN and other international organisations were highlighted. In terms of compliance, regulations and commitments were mentioned in a general manner, and the key MOIs from Agenda 21 were reemphasised here, too.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regulations • Commitments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordination among actors • IMF and World Bank • ICTs • UN and IOs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial mechanisms • Technology transfer • Technical assistance • Capacity building
<p>JPoI</p>	<p>Stresses coherence between different scales of governance and reiterated emphasis on science & technology and networks. It highlighted the need for partnerships involving 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. The JPoI also emphasised a broad mix of MOIs, ranging from education to data collection as well as reaffirming those mentioned a decade earlier at the Earth Summit.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Montreal Protocol (as example for compliance) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International and national, regional and subregional • Science & technology • Partnerships • Networks • Stakeholders and corporations • Research and development • Natural and social science • UN and IFIs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial mechanisms • Technology transfer • International institutions • Role of science • Education • Data collection
<p>TFWW</p>	<p>Emphasises a fair share of collaborative elements, including international level action, science and research, importance of access to information, the role of statistical offices in tracking progress. UN, IOs and national agencies. More conceptually, it highlighted the role of innovation, technology, and development data. On the compliance side, the importance of certification for private sector, as well as the need to curb illicit flows were highlighted. Many of the highlighted MOIs were built on partnerships and cooperation on finance, science and particular issue areas like health and energy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring • Control • Surveillance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National, regional, and international • Academia, science and technology • Best practices • Information sharing • Partnerships Research • Gov't and UN 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financing • Technology • Institutional framework • Capacity building • Trade • Registry of Commitments

HLP	Emphasises all levels of governance and coherence among them, the roles of science, technology and research. Government and UN also got their fair share of emphasis, and there were calls for sharing of information and best practices, as well as reiteration of the importance of partnerships. Compliance elements were monitoring, control and surveillance. MOIs were the well-known areas of financing, technology, institutional framework, capacity building trade, and a new voluntary registry of commitments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certification • Business • Illicit financial flows 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International • Science • Information • Research • Statistical Offices • IOs and national agencies • UN • Innovation • Technology • Development data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New partnerships (E4All, Gavi, Zero Hunger etc.) • Emphasis on multi-stakeholder partnerships • Mobilisation of public and private sources of finance (based on Monterrey) • Promotion of collaboration on and access to science, technology, innovation, and development data
OWG	Contains approximately 74 targets that relate broadly to governance or implementation; 19 of these are covered under Goal 17—a goal that focuses exclusively on MOI—while most of the remaining 55 are listed as enabling targets for the other 16 goals. The OWG organised 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 embedded enabling targets throughout all SDGs, which was hotly disputed, but stayed nonetheless.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/A 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Global • Cooperate • Partnership • Multi-stakeholder 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finance • Technology • Trade • Capacity building • Policy and institutional coherence • Multi-stakeholder partnerships • Data, monitoring and accountability
SGs Report	Refers to governance 12 times and includes two out of five sections on implementation (United Nations, 2014). It also suggests the value of volunteerism and seems strong on collaboration elements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/A 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Innovation • UN • Participation • Inclusiveness • Cooperation • Partnerships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financing • Partnerships • Multi-stakeholder • Volunteerism

First, there is a generally greater emphasis on governance and MOI. Second, compliance-based governance words such as those referring to regulations, laws and rules receive less of an emphasis over time. Third, collaborative governance words that place a growing focus on partnerships, information, research, capacity and others receive greater emphasis over time. Fourth, the core MOIs remain quite similar throughout, but newer documents stress combinations as opposed to individual MOI such as partnerships, registries of commitments and volunteerism that are enabled by collaborative forms of governance. In short, the qualitative review of the documents seems to support the three main hypotheses.

While this first step qualitative analysis of how these documents treat different forms of governance and MOI yielded interesting information, it was at times difficult to survey changes due to the myriad of details in the documents. Even with the simplifying summaries in Table 5, 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 in-depth 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 (20 words) (see Annex for words). The words that were selected contain (and build on) governance framework for compliance and collaboration-based governance from one of the works in the literature review (Cadman 2009). This framework is, however, elaborated by additional search words related to governance and implementation that emerged through the repeated reading of the documents as well as discussions with experts at recent high level sustainable development meetings. The applied search terms are an ‘approximation’ of what the authors believe characterise compliance, collaboration, and MOI.

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 is not without imperfections, especially in attempting to deduce the true positions of political actors (Laver and Garry 2000:2; Klemmensen et al. 2007). Both automated and manual word counting will not replace repeated reading in conducting text-analysis (Benoit et al. 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 and Garry

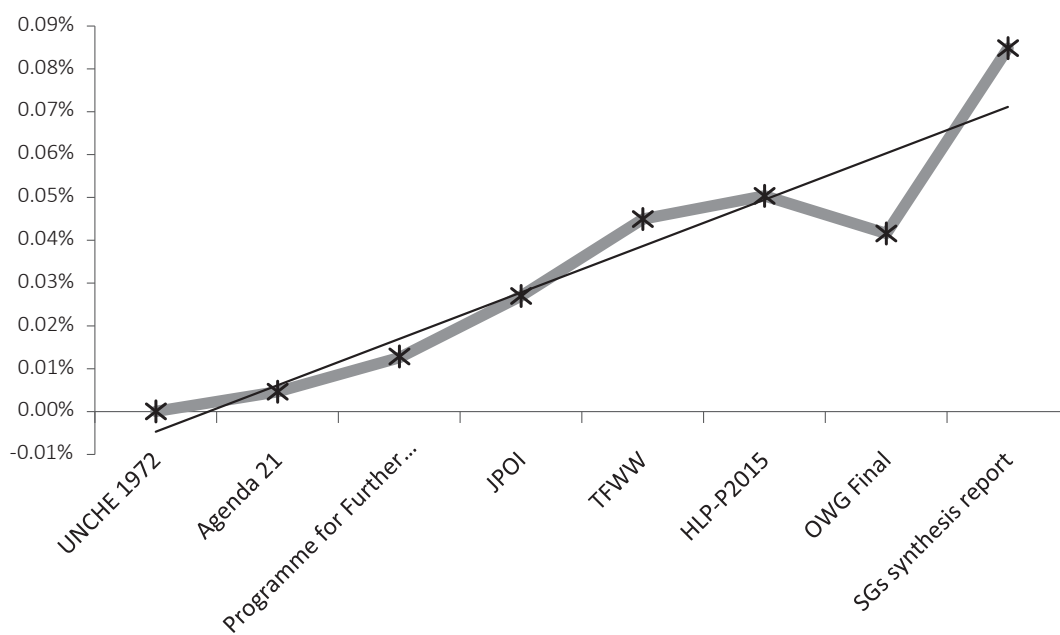
2001:1; Gemenis 2013). Moreover while this used to require a time- and labour intensive process, the development of software and digital text has eased the burden greatly.

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 stemmed key words, meaning that different grammatical tenses of the search terms were included. In some cases, the authors also ‘lemmatized’ or reduced a word to its most basic form to discover all different versions of one word in the text. When counting the occurrence of specific words, the authors represent text as data to establish ‘term frequency’.

It is also possible to use a dictionary method to measure the strength or tone of a certain document with regards to the subject one wants to research. Words are then given a score of either +1 if they add strength or -1 if they weaken it. This has not been done in this iteration of the paper, as it would be challenging to arrive at an agreed ‘barometer’ of words with varying strengths. Instead of this additional step there is a simple acknowledgement that the array of key words are of varying strengths, some more focused on the inputs (the means), and others on the outcomes (the ends) of governance.

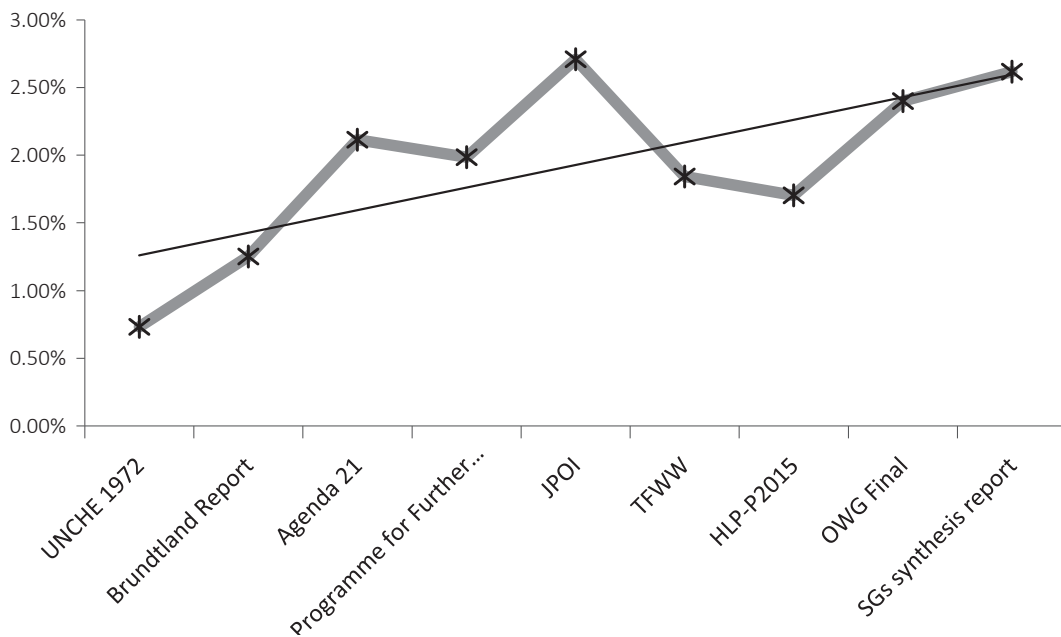
For the manual word count in the second step of this analysis, a few general patterns stand out. First, the term frequency of ‘governance’ in the documents has increased markedly over time, starting at a low point of zero in 1972 to 0.085% in 2014 - representing a significant increase.

Figure 6. Governance over time



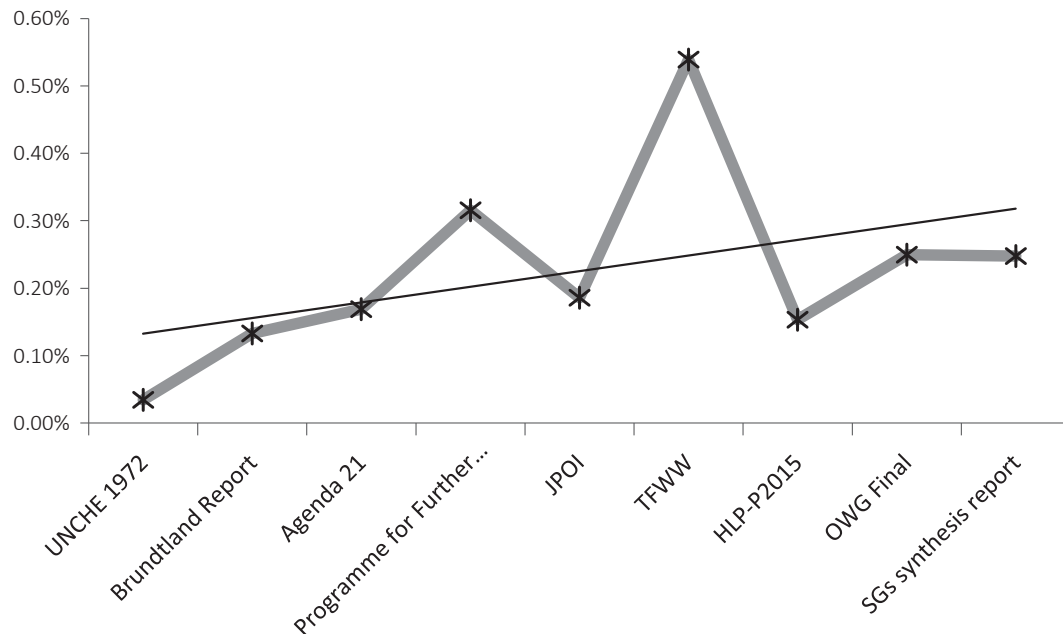
When looking for MOI related key words, it was noticed that on average these constitute just 1.9% of the total words in the documents. Moreover, the frequency of key words related to MOI increase over time but spike in the middle with the 2002 Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, because its outcome document focused on implementation. Conversely, attention to implementation decreased in the Rio+20 conference outcome document. At this conference, governments made few concrete decisions on implementation, but instead mandated subsequent processes such as those on the SDGs and financing, which are meant to deal with MOI.

Figure 7. MOI over time



It is notable that there is a 1.9% increase between 1972 and 2014. The usual implementation-related MOI such as finance, institutions, technology, resources, rank highly across time. Principles such as ownership and universality are new words that emerge over time in the reviewed documents. This matches well with the ‘newly emerging’ MOI words that were pointed out above such as volunteerism, registry of commitments, and partnerships. Next, the development of compliance-focused key words in the reviewed documents is shown.

Figure 8. Compliance-based governance over time



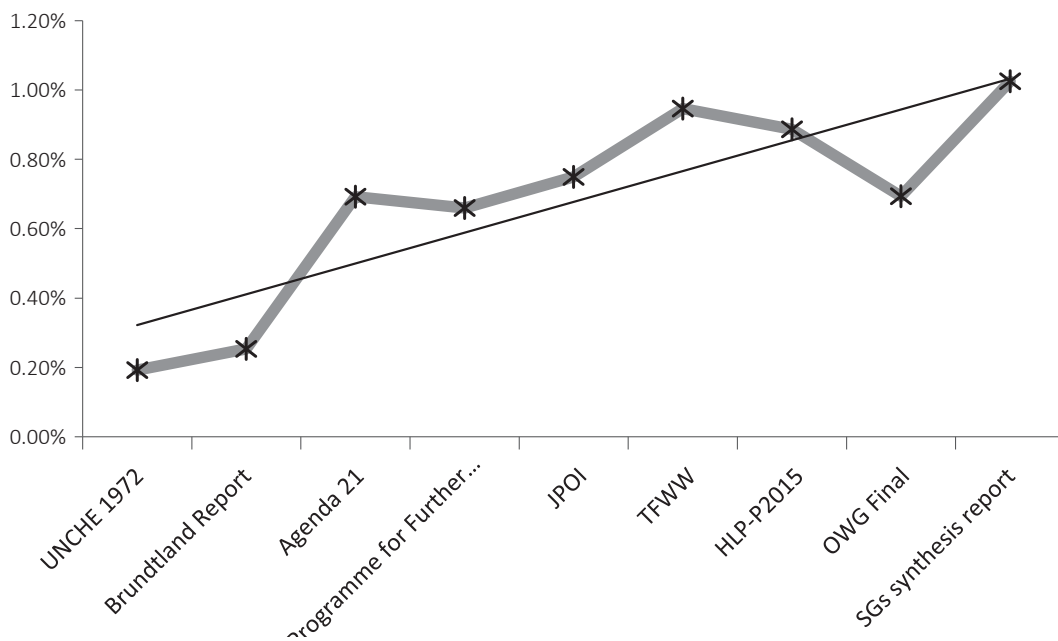
The above graph shows that there was a spike in compliance-based governance words in the Rio+20 outcome document to nearly 0.54% representation proportional to the total word count. However, the main trend of compliance-based governance key-words increased more gradually from almost zero to over 0.2% 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: (i) 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 (ii) 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 occur. The same goes for punitive compliance words, such as ‘sanction’ or ‘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 9. 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 occur in the documents, even if they only refer to what governments should do at national levels.

4 Discussion and Way Forward

This paper contributes to the discussion on evolving trends on governance and MOI. This is especially relevant for the almost-concluded process to define the future post-2015 development agenda, which is expected to be transformative, integrated and universal. Living up to that ambition requires a change in the way different actors approach development. 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 paper emphasises the importance of more collaborative types of governance—with more nuanced views suggesting complementarities with traditional compliance based governance. Many of these conclusions are based on case studies in a particular policy area, region and period of time. It has not yet been empirically analysed to what extent intergovernmental reports and negotiated documents on sustainability show a similar trend. The paper helps to fill this gap by showing that over the last four decades governance, and especially collaborative forms of governance and related MOI, are becoming more pronounced features of the sustainable development discourse at the intergovernmental level.

The trends illustrated in this report show the evolution in how national governments and the UN system understand governance. The paper 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 interpretations, acknowledging that they are on somewhat speculative ground. The analysis presented in previous sections suggests that the older and narrower view of governance being mainly about governments' use of hard 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. What speaks 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 noticed earlier in this paper, there is still a huge and widely recognised implementation gap, which indicates shortcomings in governance effectiveness. There is perhaps more support for the second, 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 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.

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, but we fear that incentives for action may be too weak without active governmental orchestration and without the possibility of compliance-based policy measures.

Finally, there are at least five limitations to this study that could benefit from 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.

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. In fact, arguably the most important MOI in a world with a greater emphasis on collaboration will be capacity building. This 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 UN agenda have 'real' roots (UNSG 2014, Hajer, Nilsson, Raworth et al. 2015). 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.

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. This would also help shed some light on whether governments increasingly use collaborative governance text

in their outcome documents as part of real intentions to change the way they work 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 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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Annex 1. List of key-words:

<i>Collaborative governance key words (17)</i>		<i>Compliance governance key words (11)</i>	
- Equality		- Compliance	
- Accountability		- Conform	
- Transparency		- Legal	
- Democracy		- Commit	
- Agreement		- Mandatory	
- Dispute settlement		- Sanction	
- Behavioral/behavioural change		- Punish	
- Problem solving		- Fine	
- Durability		- Binding	
- Deliberation		- Adhere	
- Collaboration		- Enforce	
- Participation			
- Partnership			
- Engage			
- Involvement			
- Cooperation			
- Consult			
<i>Overarching implementation related key words (20)</i>			
- MOI	- Review		
- Resources	- Reporting		
- Inputs	- Target		
- Outcomes	- ODA		
- Partnership	- Donor		
- Commit	- Capacity		
- Finance	- Universality		
- Technology	- Common		
- Institutions	- Differentiated		
- Trade	- Ownership		

IGES Institute for Global
Environmental Strategies

2108-11 Kamiyamaguchi, Hayama, Kanagawa, 240-0115 Japan
TEL : +81-(0)46-855-3700 FAX : +81-(0)46-855-3709 E-mail: iges@iges.or.jp
<http://www.iges.or.jp>

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