

Effective Sustainable Development Governance: Analyzing the Governance by Rules and Goals for Achieving the UN's 2030 Agenda

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The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) agenda was adopted in 2015, aiming to achieve its objectives by 2030. With less than 6 years remaining, the need for effective governance to implement and enforce sustainable development policies is crucial. Effective governance of the SDGs is crucial for global sustainability. This article explores governance areas where some progress toward sustainable development has been made and examines how these areas could drive broader transformation. The primary objective of this paper is to contribute to the discourse on conceptualizing and implementing effective sustainable development governance within the context of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. The paper aims to provide valuable perspectives on developing governance systems that are both efficient and flexible, thereby addressing the obstacles that have impeded advancements towards the attainment of the SDGs. The paper explores two governance models for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): rule-based and goal-based governance. Rule-based governance is based on formal laws and clear compliance standards, providing predictability but limited flexibility. Goal-based governance establishes broad targets without prescribing specific methods, fostering innovation while potentially leading to uneven enforcement. By conducting a thorough comparative analysis, the paper brings attention to the strengths and weaknesses of both models. Rule-based governance is well-suited for situations that demand precise regulations, while goal-based governance is more effective when dealing with complex and adaptable challenges. The paper explores the necessary conditions for successfully implementing each model, considering factors such as institutional capacity and stakeholder engagement. It aims to offer guidance on how to optimize governance frameworks to advance the SDGs.

Key words: sustainable development goals, global governance, governance by rules, governance by goals.

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INTRODUCTION

The key international agreements for a sustainable future are the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Paris Agreement on climate. They strike a balance between what is scientifically necessary and what is politically feasible (Kanie et al., 2019). The SDGs and the Paris Agreement on climate represent significant institutional innovations in global governance, marking a shift from traditional rule-making to goal-setting strategies (Kanie et al., 2019). This shift aims to steer societal behavior by establishing priorities, galvanizing efforts, and providing benchmarks for tracking progress. The Paris Agreement carries legal obligations, while the SDGs are not legally binding, which means their success heavily relies on the voluntary commitment and cooperation of various actors, including governments, international organizations, the private sector, and civil society (Kanie et al., 2019). The 2030 Agenda and its 17 SDGs emerged from two years of intense international negotiations (Kamau et al., 2018). The agenda is a comprehensive attempt by the United Nations to define universally agreed political ambitions to shift the world onto a more sustainable and resilient path (Hickmann et al., 2024). It reflects a global commitment to achieving sustainable development in three interconnected dimensions: economic, social, and environmental. These dimensions contribute to the achievement of sustainable development by preserving human dignity, creating a just society, promoting healthy living, advancing the economy, and ensuring peace and prosperity for all people (UN Agenda 2030). The adoption of the SDGs has drawn scholarly attention (Glass & Newig, 2019), but there are only a limited number of years left to accomplish them. Sustainable Development Goals are universal and applicable to all countries and communities.

Governance plays a crucial role in sustainable development. Effective governance for sustainable development involves several key aspects: participation, policy coherence, reflexivity, adaptation, and democratic institutions. These elements are essential for achieving the SDGs, as they facilitate collaboration, resource sharing, and the integration of sustainability into national and local policies (Glass et al., 2023). However, progress toward the SDGs has been slow. While there were early successes from 2015 to 2020, such as reductions in maternal and child mortality, increased access to electricity, and slightly more women in leadership roles (United Nations, 2020), challenges persist. Poverty increased, and progress on hunger, climate change, and inequality has been limited (Global Sustainable Development Report, 2019). The situation worsened with the COVID-19 pandemic, Russia's invasion of Ukraine, global crises, conflicts, and environmental disasters. Earlier gains were reversed, and by the SDGs' midpoint, frustration with the lack of political will to prioritize the global goals is widespread. The 2023 UN General Secretary's report highlights the growing unlikelihood of achieving any of the 17 SDGs by 2030, calling for a "rescue plan" focused on accelerating progress, improving conditions for developing countries, and enhancing governance and institutional capacity (United Nations, 2023).

The private sector also plays a critical role in sustainable development governance. Businesses are increasingly being called upon to integrate the SDGs into their operations and to form partnerships with governments and civil society to address global sustainability challenges. Despite these efforts, concerns about "SDG-washing" and the selective engagement of businesses with the SDGs remain (Hickmann, 2024).

All states are urged to include the SDGs in their national sustainability and development strategies (UNGA Resolution, 2015). The non-binding nature of the SDGs allows for flexibility and adaptation to local circumstances, but it also means that their impact depends on political will and commitment. It is crucial to consider the unique situations, conditions, and opportunities in various parts of the world while implementing these goals. Each country or community should prioritize areas of action according to their needs and abilities to contribute to sustainable development on a global scale. By doing so, each nation will become part of a global partnership, which is necessary for achieving the SDGs. Decision-making, implementation, and monitoring for the SDGs require engagement from stakeholders in the public and business sectors and civil society due to their complexity and interdependence. The consideration of the SDGs must be included in both domestic and foreign policies (Boas et al., 2016). Formulating strategies to consider the distinct challenges and prospects in different nations and regions may include facilitating reforms in legal and institutional frameworks, promoting access to justice, strengthening the rule of law in areas affected by conflict, and establishing partnerships between the public and private sectors to enhance accountability and transparency.

This article contributes to the discussion on effective governance for sustainable development. In order to achieve regulatory aims, this article analyses two general strategies: governance by rules and governance by goals. Comparing these approaches, their traits, and their respective merits is the objective. Governance by rules, which is often associated with the institutional theory of governance, emphasizes the importance of formal rules, procedures, and institutions in

shaping governance and decision-making (Scholte, 2021). This approach is based on the idea that rules and institutions provide a framework for decision-making that is consistent, predictable, and fair. Under this approach, decision-making is guided by established rules and procedures. This approach is often used in bureaucratic or hierarchical organizations, where decision-making is centralized and standardized. Governance by goals, on the other hand, emphasizes the importance of achieving specific outcomes or objectives in governance. This approach is often associated with the constructivist theory of governance, which emphasizes the role of ideas and beliefs in shaping governance and decision-making. Under this approach, decision-making is guided by specific goals or objectives. This approach is often used in more decentralized or networked organizations, where decision-making is distributed among multiple actors. The distinctions between the two tactics and their respective benefits and drawbacks are covered in this paper. These approaches differ in how they view the function of the state and other actors, the extent of regulation and control, and the balance between state and market forces.

Therefore, this paper adopts a cautious approach to addressing this issue. It begins by exploring the concepts of governance and sustainable development, aiming to identify potential intersections and areas of connection between them. Subsequently, the paper delves into separate examinations of governance by rules and governance by goals. When scrutinizing governance by rules, special emphasis is placed on the importance of a functional legal system and the rule of law in advancing sustainable development. This necessitates the establishment of a comprehensive legal framework that upholds essential constitutional principles. Conversely, the examination of governance by

goals unveils the lessons learned from the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and how they can be strategically applied to ensure the successful implementation of the SDGs.

GOVERNANCE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Governance and sustainable development are interdependent concepts. Implementing sustainable development ideas is a major challenge across global, national, and local levels. The transition of these ideas into national policy is where sustainable development and governance become essential. Hence, governance for sustainable development could be seen as a framework for discussing and deciding on the social, economic and environmental development.

Understanding the Concept of Governance

Governance is difficult to define, as it involves public institutions that respect individual rights and public decision-making processes (Keefer, 2004). Also, very often it substitutes for something else (Ackerman, 2017). For example, people may use the term “governance” to refer to management, leadership, or administration, even though these concepts are distinct from governance. Therefore, it is important to clarify what specific aspects of governance are being referred to when using the term. It is noted that governance still has no generally accepted definition despite years of scholarly debate. Some authors have made efforts to define governance as the process of maintaining coordination and coherence among a diverse range of actors with varying goals and objectives, which can include political actors, institutions, corporate interests, and transnational organizations (Pierre, 2000). By maintaining coordination and coher-

ence among these actors, governance can help to promote stability, reduce conflict, and achieve shared goals and objectives. Some authors highlight the significance of beliefs, practices, traditions, and dilemmas in the study of governance (Rhodes, 2007). Other authors engage in philosophical discourse, underscoring the dynamic and intricate aspects of governance (Yani, 2018). Some define governance as the framework of processes and structures guiding the direction and management of an organization's activities, with a focus on accountability and managing stakeholder relationships (McManus & White, 2008), while others reject oversimplified perspectives on governance, advocating for a nuanced, distributed approach that integrates coercion, market exchange, and reciprocity (Paquet, 1999).

Governance, much like sustainable development, is a concept with various definitions and interpretations. Definitions of governance are varied and contested. The distinction between government and governance is a key aspect of many definitions of governance (Glass & Newig, 2019; Bevir, 2011). Governance involves questioning and potentially revising the established constitutional and formal frameworks that define how governments operate (Stoker, 1998). It refers to the practices and processes involved in making and implementing decisions within a society or organization. It encompasses a broad range of activities, from setting policies and making laws to managing resources and resolving conflicts. In many cases, these activities are governed by formal rules and structures, such as a constitution or a set of laws. However, governance can also involve challenging these established rules and structures in order to improve how they function. This may involve questioning assumptions about how power is distributed, how decisions are made, or how resources are allocated.

By challenging these fundamental understandings, governance can help to identify areas for improvement and drive reforms that can make government more effective, efficient, and responsive to the needs of the people it serves. So, governance is not synonymous with government. They are related concepts but refer to different aspects of the systems through which a society or organization is governed. The term “governance” is used to refer to the processes and mechanisms through which a society is governed and regulated; the process of decision-making and the process by which decisions are implemented or not implemented, while “government” refers specifically to the institutions and actors that are responsible for exercising power and making decisions. In light of this discussion, some authors define governance as a government’s capacity to establish and enforce regulations, and to provide services, irrespective of whether the government is democratic or not (Fukuyama, 2013). The challenges and constraints of governance vary from state to state and there is no one-size-fits-all policy in governance that can be applied to all countries equally. Each nation has distinct political, economic, and social circumstances that have an impact on the creation and application of governance policies. For example, a country with a well-established democratic system may have different governance challenges than a country undergoing a political transition. It is essential to approach governance in accordance with a customized, context-specific plan given these variables. This entails evaluating the difficulties and constraints each country faces and developing governing laws that are specific to their needs.

Understanding Sustainable Development

Sustainability has reached a status comparable to democracy, freedom, and

justice: it is universally sought after, subject to various interpretations, broad in scope, extremely difficult to implement, and cannot be ignored. Nowadays, no country openly opposes sustainability. Yet, the route to achieving it is ambiguous, lacking a clear-cut model. Humanity might perpetually be in search of sustainability. Like the quest for justice, achieving full sustainability may never happen, but this does not lessen the significance of aiming for it. The perspective is not limited to national boundaries or political systems but encompasses all aspects of society and values that influence policies and initiatives on local, regional, national, and international levels. It is crucial to differentiate between sustainable development and sustainability. Sustainable development encompasses targeted measures implemented to attain the overarching objective of sustainability.

The notion of ‘sustainable development’ gained significant prominence in international discourse as a result of the United Nations’ endeavors to tackle global environmental concerns. The term was initially used in the report “Our Common Future” (Our Common Future: Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987). This report laid the groundwork for the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), which reached its peak at the 1992 Earth Summit. This comprehension forms the basis for the standard framework for later conventions and agreements formed in Rio, directing the activities of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (UNCSD) and allied programs such as UNEP, UNDP, and the ‘Habitat’ program. “Our Common Future” defines sustainable development as the capacity to fulfill present needs while safeguarding the ability of future generations to fulfill their own needs. It emphasizes the importance of prioritizing the world’s impover-

ished population and recognizes the limitations imposed by technology and social organizations on environmental sustainability.

Sustainable development, focusing on environmental sustainability, includes six universal objectives in the 2030 vision (Griggs et al., 2013). The first goal is to improve individual living standards, eliminate poverty, raise welfare, minimize unemployment, assure equitable income distribution, and promote education, health, and housing circumstances. The second aim is to ensure enduring food safety, enhance nutrition, and establish sustainable systems for food production and delivery. The third goal focuses on water safety by ensuring universal access to clean water and appropriate water resources management. The fourth goal is to provide widespread availability of clean energy, therefore mitigating air pollution and improving public health while reducing global warming. The fifth purpose stresses preserving healthy ecosystems through governance, evaluation, conservation, and restoration initiatives. The final objective is to develop sustainable public administration to complement the preceding five goals. The governance structures of sustainable communities must be in line with these goals to guarantee environmental protection and sustainable development, resulting in better education, equitable economic distribution, and improved living conditions.

The concept of future generations is a fundamental aspect of sustainability, and it raises an important question about the responsibility of present generations towards the future. In essence, it asks: what kind of world are we leaving behind for future generations? This question is at the heart of sustainable development, as it recognizes the importance of preserving resources and creating a future that is livable and prosperous for all. By focusing

on the needs of future generations, we can ensure that our actions today do not compromise the well-being of future generations or damage the natural environment that supports us all. In short, the concept of future generations in sustainable development underscores the idea that we have a responsibility to consider the long-term impacts of our actions, and to work towards creating a more equitable, sustainable, and resilient world for both present and future generations. Therefore, sustainable development can be seen as a powerful ethical or moral message about what needs to be done (Holden et al., 2016). It is often emphasized that sustainable development must be a priority of the 21st century (Woodhead, 2016).

GOVERNANCE BY RULES

The concept of sustainable development is connected to rules and regulations. Governance by rules places emphasis on formal rules, procedures, and institutions as key factors that shape decision-making and governance. It is designed to establish and enforce regulations, norms, and laws to ensure order and provide guidance for a range of activities within society. It involves the use of formal and informal mechanisms to guide behavior and enforce compliance with established norms and regulations. Governance by rules is also known as regulatory governance (Kjaer, & Vetterlein, 2018). In recent years, it has gained prominence and is now commonly used in both policy discussions and academic discourse (Jordana et al., 2015).

The Role of a Functional Legal System and the Rule of Law in Achieving SDG

The concept of the rule of law is not a rigid regulation or legislation, but rather a political principle designed to restrict the

capricious use of authority by establishing the appropriate roles of the government and the procedures for making decisions and creating laws. It emerged throughout centuries of political warfare in Western Europe, having origins in ancient Greek philosophy. During the Enlightenment, political theory reconstructed power dynamics between the sovereign and subject around the concepts of the social compact, natural rights, and the rule of law. Contractarian views hold that the legitimacy of sovereign power is established by a consensual agreement in which citizens willingly relinquish a certain degree of freedom in return for security. While this social contract validates centralized authority, it also demands boundaries so that the advantages of power are returned to the people. Therefore, contemporary governments are established based on the fundamental concepts of human rights, democracy, and the rule of law, which establish the dynamics of power inside Western legal frameworks. In international development, the central question is whether the rule of law should be fundamental to every state. The answer is generally 'yes', although this is often based more on intuition than empirical evidence (Ramanujam et al., 2022).

There are various perspectives on how legal systems and the rule of law can promote lasting prosperity (Schulz & Dankert, 2016). One way is to promote societal integration by minimizing conflicts and enabling smooth social interactions. This can only be realized if the legal system abides by a set of rules that guarantee the absence of overt or covert conflicts during social interactions. This approach allows for better resource management and decision-making, promoting a stable, fair, and accountable governance environment. It also protects the interests of individuals and communities, ensuring that public resources support sustainable development.

The governance agenda also recognizes the rule of law's role in curbing arbitrariness, reducing corruption, and limiting inequitable capital accumulation. Some scholars link respect for the rule of law with economic growth. However, China has risen to the upper-middle-income bracket and become the world's second-largest economy without adhering to the fundamental principle of the rule of law, where both legislators and legal subjects are equally accountable. China's rapid economic growth, without the presence of good institutions or the rule of law, has puzzled the development community. Some view China's success as a result of the co-evolution of economic and legal systems. The state and market are seen as mutually stabilizing systems, with the legal system both empowering and limiting the state, thereby fostering investment by meeting the needs of economic actors. This perspective underscores the importance of local conditions and the complementarity of institutions (Deakin & Pistor, 2012). Ramanujam et al. (2019) attribute China's success to state-led development, which has leveraged globalization and robust infrastructure to attract industry. Now, China can invest in its formal institutions, though its approach may not be easily replicable, demonstrating the need for context-specific solutions. Despite recent economic shocks from the coronavirus pandemic, China's economy has not shown signs of stagnation.

Contrary, some countries have managed to achieve success in governance regarding sustainable development by improving the rule of law. During the 1990s, Costa Rica dedicated significant resources to integrating sustainability into its legal and governance systems. It has enacted numerous laws to safeguard its diverse ecosystem and advance sustainable practices, solidifying its position as a frontrunner in global environmental management.

In Costa Rica, the Payment for Environmental Services Program (PESP) has been a pioneering initiative that reflects the importance of legal and institutional frameworks in promoting sustainable development. The PESP's governance is a social construction involving multiple stakeholders who influence the program's objectives and functioning based on their interests and power dynamics (Coq, 2013). This program's success is attributed to the effective balance of power among stakeholders and the legal institutionalization through the Costa Rican forestry law of 1997 (Coq, 2010).

Moreover, the effectiveness of natural protected areas in Costa Rica, such as the Piedras Blancas National Park, is linked to higher levels of governance and empowerment, which are essential for sustainable development. Cooperation between local actors and institutions, along with secure land tenure and clear demarcation, are critical factors that contribute to low deforestation rates and successful environmental governance (Vázquez-Villa, 2020). Additionally, Costa Rica's ambitious goal to become carbon neutral by 2021 highlights the role of strong governance and legal frameworks in achieving sustainable development.

Global statements and convincing research have demonstrated that the rule of law and sustainable development are closely related (Bouloukos & Dakin, 2001). At events like the World Summit in 2005, the High-Level Meeting of the General Assembly on the Rule of Law in 2012, and the Sustainable Development Summit in 2015, world leaders adopted declarations endorsing those connections (UNGA World Summit Outcome, 2005). These international commitments go beyond aspirational statements. Studies have shown a connection between maintaining the rule of law and sustained growth and

development across all areas - economics, politics, society, and the environment (Michael, 2020). In other words, following the rule of law is not just good for one area of society, it benefits everything. That is why these commitments carry weight and should be taken seriously. When the rule of law is strong, it ensures a cohesive and inclusive society. A cohesive and inclusive society, where different groups of people are united and able to work together and where diversity is respected and valued, is essential for sustainable development. In such a society, individuals feel safe and secure, which enables them to reach their full potential and actively contribute to their community. This means that people can pursue their goals and aspirations, participate in decision-making processes that affect their lives, and contribute to the development of their community. In contrast, a society plagued by conflict, violence, and insecurity is less likely to be sustainable, as individuals are unable to reach their full potential and participate in community life. In order to achieve sustainable development, it is important to ensure basic safety and security, so that individuals can participate in their communities and contribute to their development. The 2016 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Annual Report on The Rule of Law and Human Rights emphasizes that Sustainable Development Goal 16 (SDG 16) aims to create a new form of development, where individuals have a say in the decisions that impact their lives and where communities can flourish (UNDP Annual Report 2016). The report highlights the crucial role that governance and the rule of law play in advancing peaceful, equitable, and inclusive societies and ensuring sustainable development. The rule of law additionally assists in reducing environmental deterioration and other forms of unsustainable development by fostering accountability and openness.

Challenges for Advancing the Rule of Law in Governance and Development

The progression of the rule of law in governance and development encounters multiple obstacles, among them the necessity for a cultural shift towards valuing the rule of law (Jean, 2019), and the possibility of conflicts arising from diverse visions and methodologies (Trubek, 2004). Addressing these challenges involves strategies like legal empowerment, targeting the underprivileged (Golub, 2007), and adopting the governance view of the rule of law, which balances human authority with legal principles (Lui, 2022). The success of these approaches depends on how the rule of law initiatives are designed and executed, suggesting a focus on outcomes, continuous learning, and involving stakeholders. Despite obstacles, the rule of law remains essential for development. Additionally, the contribution of external bodies, like UN transitional administrations, in instituting the rule of law in states facing disruption is critical (Bull, 2007). Navigating progress in this area poses a significant challenge, primarily because the concept is multifaceted and, therefore, difficult to address in a straightforward manner.

GOVERNANCE BY GOALS

The initiation of the SDGs and the Paris Agreement indicates a move from rule-making towards goal-setting within the realm of global governance. This new model is centered on global goals internationally agreed upon. These goals are characterized by their time-bound, measurable, and aspirational nature (Biermann et al., 2020). Although global goal-setting has been part of governance since the latter half of the twentieth century, its significance has surged over the past few decades. It has increasingly relied on setting broad policy goals as a mechanism

to coordinate the efforts of governments, international organizations, civil society, the private sector, and citizens worldwide. The concept of governance through goals is, hence, a novel approach. The underlying principle of this approach is that setting specific goals and desired results can be more advantageous compared to strict rule enforcement, as it motivates individuals to take responsibility for their tasks and encourages creativity in seeking solutions to achieve their objectives. This transformation necessitates adjustments in existing tools and policies to align with the new approach.

Global Development Goals as a Policy Tool

The utilization of global development goals as a means to advance key global objectives has witnessed a growing trend among the United Nations and the international community (Jolly, Emmerij & Weiss, 2009). For decades, global goals have consistently featured in UN declarations, serving as a significant instrument for the UN to steer international cooperation in development. The inaugural UN Development Decade initiated in 1961 established goals pertaining to economic growth and development aid (Shaw, 2002). Numerous goals have been set since then, playing a crucial role in attracting attention and spearheading campaigns to address critical global development challenges. Notable examples include the “Education for All” goals established at the 1990 Jomtien Conference and the child survival goals set during the 1990 World Children’s Summit (Fukuda-Parr, 2013). Despite the significance and widespread adoption of global goals as a policy tool, there remains a lack of understanding regarding their potential, limitations, and implications. Questions surrounding their effectiveness often focus solely on whether targets have

been met, neglecting empirical inquiries into unintended consequences. Furthermore, there is a dearth of conceptual exploration regarding how goals operate, the incentives they create, their optimal conditions for success, and their strengths and weaknesses. This limited understanding of global goals can lead to inadequate design and implementation. The experience of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) exemplifies this issue, as they achieved success in raising awareness and guiding resource allocation but also sparked controversy regarding their formulation and implementation.

Some countries have started implementing the SDGs through governance by goals by integrating the SDGs into their national and local policies, strategies, and management practices. This approach involves setting clear targets, monitoring progress, and fostering collaboration across various sectors and levels of government. Sweden is widely recognized as a highly accomplished nation in effectively implementing the SDGs by adopting a governance-by-goals approach. The country's dedication to sustainable development is deeply ingrained in its national policies. Its approach blends adaptable goal-setting with robust national oversight and active public involvement.

Sweden has integrated the SDGs into both national and local governance frameworks. At the national level, the Swedish government has committed to being a leader in SDG implementation, as reflected in their Voluntary National Review (VNR) which emphasizes health as tied to societal inequalities and the need for integrated political action (Lillehagen et al., 2020). Locally, municipalities like Region Östergötland have incorporated the SDGs into their strategic planning and management to avoid parallel non-effective processes and marginalization of the

SDGs (Gustafsson, 2018). Sweden has also developed multi-actor platforms for SDG implementation at the county level, emphasizing the importance of discussing organizational understanding and ambitions early in the collaboration process (Krantz, 2023). The municipality of Växjö has taken an integrated approach to SDG localization, developing a sustainability program called "Sustainable Växjö 2030" (SV2030). This program aims to integrate sustainability into ongoing organizational policies and processes, involving cross-sectoral management systems and broad stakeholder engagement (Krantz, 2021). Australia has been encouraged to adopt an integrated multilateral approach similar to Sweden's to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic and meet the goals outlined in the 2030 Agenda. This involves stronger domestic implementation and alignment of domestic law and policy with the SDGs (Delaney, 2022).

Nevertheless, it is argued that the effectiveness of global goals lies in their ability to incentivize action. However, these incentives are relatively weak, as compliance does not bring direct rewards. Instead, global goals rely on the power of numbers to drive behavior change, shape debates, mobilize resources, strengthen accountability, and create peer pressure for alignment with the goals at the national level (Fukuda-Parr, 2013). Through this approach, the actions of governmental and non-governmental actors are coordinated in order to achieve globally accepted policy goals (Vijge et al., 2020).

Goal-Setting in Global Governance: The Four Key Features

The SDGs' approach to governance, centered around goal-setting, encompasses various features, each not exclusive to this governance model. Nonetheless, the collective presence of these traits constitutes

a distinctive and innovative method of direction and a novel institutional configuration in the realm of global governance. Available literature suggests the four characteristics of this type of governance: their non-legally binding nature, weak global institutional arrangements, inclusive goal-setting processes and national leeway (Vijge et al., 2020). First, they are non-legally binding. The UN General Assembly resolution that established the SDGs are not legally binding which means it does not confer immediate legal authority to these goals, leaving governments without a legal mandate to incorporate the goals into their national legal systems. In other words, the non-legally binding nature of goals implies that they are not legally enforceable, and therefore actors may not feel compelled to comply. Despite lacking legal bindingness, the SDGs carry normative weight in international environmental law (Pavoni & Piselli, 2016). Their alignment with legal obligations in numerous international treaties grants the SDGs a unique position as an internationally recognized value stemming from this connection. As an international value, they broaden the range of rights and obligations to encompass additional stakeholders, easing the incorporation of the SDGs into the wider sphere of international law. This process results in the integration of the SDGs originally non-binding global values, with legally binding commitments, thereby eventually enabling their enforcement. In general, we could say that the SDGs play a dual role in the realm of global governance. Firstly, they operate as specific norms, providing a shared framework of expectations and creating incentives for individuals, organizations, and governments to modify their behaviors in alignment with the goals. By setting clear targets and benchmarks, global goals encourage action and drive progress towards desired outcomes. Secondly, the SDGs

serve as a means of expressing specific goals in a concrete and measurable manner. They offer a common language and shared understanding, enabling effective communication and coordination among diverse stakeholders. By articulating goals in tangible terms, they facilitate collaboration, mobilize resources, and guide efforts towards achieving desired, sustainable outcomes.

Secondly, the SDGs operate within frail institutional structures, with global oversight for their implementation remaining unclear. There is no strong international body to oversee the implementation of these goals. However, weak global institutional frameworks do not necessarily predict a lower likelihood of SDGs' successful implementation. The key to success is seen in the bottom-up, non-confrontational, country-led, and stakeholder-centered approach of governance (Biermann et al., 2020). The literature emphasizes the vital role of national and local governments in implementing and interpreting the SDGs with some emphasizing domestic policymaking's role (Tosun & Leininger, 2017) and others advocating for integrated strategies and cross-sectoral communication (Bianchi & Richiedei, 2023). Democratic institutions play a crucial role in this debate (Pomerantz, 2011). The effectiveness of these institutions in development is believed to hinge on public perception of their credibility (Holmberg et al., 2009). Democratic institutions encompass a variety of elements, including freedom of expression, inclusive elections, rule of law, and an independent judiciary, which are pivotal for development (Norris, 2012; Pomerantz, 2011). Theories on democracy and development, like those proposed by Norris (2012) and based on the median voter theory (Meltzer and Richard, 1981), suggest that democratic structures can lead to equitable economic and social outcomes, with leaders acting in the pub-

lic interest when held accountable through a competitive political process. Research indicates that democratic institutions not only contribute to economic development but also address collective action problems in sustainable development's social and environmental facets. Empirical evidence supports the notion that democracy and civil liberties correlate with improved economic, societal, and environmental outcomes (Halperin et al., 2009; Dasgupta and De Cian, 2018). Some authors believe that weak institutional structures can actually help manage the issue of fragmented governance by using a method called orchestration (Biermann et al., 2020; Abot et al., 2015). This method focuses on influencing actors through encouragement and cooperation rather than through legal force, guiding them towards agreed-upon goals with a collaborative, non-confrontational approach. A key example of this in action is the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, tasked with overseeing the SDGs. Founded in 2013, the High-level Political Forum (HLPF) was created to bolster governance for sustainable development within the UN, taking over the role of the Commission on Sustainable Development. Functioning under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly, the HLPF conducts various meetings, including sessions with Heads of State and Government every four years and annual ministerial segments. Its responsibilities involve offering political leadership, guidance, and recommendations on sustainable development, improving coordination across all aspects of sustainability, facilitating discussions, monitoring advancements, and encouraging collaboration throughout the UN system. Despite the difficulties arising from a divided international landscape and rivalry between organizations, the impact of less robust institutional setups such as the High-level

Political Forum on governance effectiveness is still a subject of discussion. While there are doubts regarding their influence, a more optimistic view prevails among some, particularly when carefully planned orchestration tactics are employed.

Thirdly, the goal-setting process may be inclusive, meaning that it involves a wide range of actors and stakeholders, rather than being determined by a narrow group of decision-makers. In contrast to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which were primarily formulated by the UN Secretariat, the SDGs emerged from a more inclusive process, drawing on contributions from at least 70 governments and numerous civil society actors. Unlike the MDGs, the SDGs target both developed and developing nations, challenging the traditional notion of 'developed' countries in terms of sustainability. There is no developed country in terms of sustainability (Biermann et al., 2020). This strategy reclassifies all nations, including those in North America, Europe, East Asia, and Oceania, as 'developing countries,' compelling them to devise strategies for transitioning towards more sustainable development trajectories.

Finally, there may be some degree of national leeway, which allows individual countries to interpret and implement goals in a way that suits their particular circumstances. Global goals offer a road map for action, yet they are open to debate, negotiation, and interpretation at the national level (Fukuda-Parr, 2014). Concerns exist about how countries implement the SDGs regarding fairness and accountability. While the SDGs were created inclusively at a global level, their implementation at national levels may not always be as inclusive (Stewart, 2015). There is also a risk that applying the same global goals to every country without considering each one's unique situation could lead to unfair

results and ignore crucial areas for inclusive growth. Governance by goals increases efficiency but requires clear communication of expectations.

However, having national plans for the SDGs could improve accountability through specific monitoring and evaluation methods, such as national reports and reviews. These tools help countries identify and close gaps in meeting the SDGs, improving how governance works. Despite these efforts to make up for the limitations seen in the MDGs, challenges like oversimplification of goals and selective focus remain.

The success of this approach could connect to coherence. This is because the effectiveness of governance by goals is influenced by how well different actors and institutions involved in achieving the goals work together. When there is coherence between different actors, governance by goals can be a useful tool to promote coordination, collaboration, and innovation in achieving shared objectives. Therefore, achieving coherence could be crucial for the success of both the governance by goals, and for achieving the 2030 Agenda. In exploring solutions for promoting action coherence, the factors contributing to “action incoherence” must be considered while developing strategies to encourage it. Although more factors might exist, three important ones have been found (Kanie et al., 2019). To make decision-making easier, organizations including government agencies, business divisions, academic departments, and international organizations frequently use silo structures based on a particular discipline, problem, or industry. Secondly, the current systems frequently encourage competition, such as government agencies competing for funding, corporations competing for market share, universities competing for research income and students, and NGOs competing

for philanthropic funding, making it difficult to create the partnerships required for managing trade-offs and synergies. Thirdly, the mechanisms for encouraging cooperation across silos are underdeveloped as a result of issues including time, effort, and resource limitations as well as a lack of funding (Kanie et al., 2019).

Incorporating the SDGs into national strategies involves creating new institutions and aligning plans with the goals, but detailed plans for action and monitoring are often lacking. This can lead to a loss of ambition. Concerns have been raised about focusing too much on numbers for accountability, which might ignore broader environmental limits. However, allowing for flexibility in how countries implement the SDGs could lead to valuable learning opportunities and better integration of different knowledge areas, helping to overcome challenges in policy making. This approach encourages learning within and between institutions to develop policies that match local, national, and global goals.

This blend of characteristics defines a distinctive approach to achieving global governance objectives.

CONCLUSION

The worldwide pursuit of sustainable development, especially through the SDGs, highlights the necessity for fresh policies and inventive governance methods. This paper examined the strengths and weaknesses of rule-based and goal-oriented governance, providing a comprehensive analysis. Rule-based governance provides clear guidelines and can be enforced, but it may not be flexible enough to accommodate the diverse legal systems and cultural contexts. On the other hand, goal-oriented governance offers flexibility and inclusivity, but it can be challenging to set specific benchmarks for implementation and

measuring progress. Based on the analysis, it appears that the best way to promote sustainable development is through a combination of governance frameworks that leverage their respective strengths. Through the integration of rule-based guidance and goal-oriented flexibility, a governance strategy that is both comprehensive and adaptable can be formulated. This comprehensive model is designed to effectively tackle the various challenges of sustainability, while also establishing specific and quantifiable milestones to track progress.

Nevertheless, implementing this model universally poses a challenge as it must account for the unique circumstances of each country. In order to address this issue, the study highlights the significance of fostering sustainable governance through collaboration between governments, the private sector, and civil society. To achieve the SDGs and effectively address the complex, global challenges of sustainability, it will be crucial to continue refining this integrated approach. This will ensure a coordinated and effective response moving forward.

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Sažetak

UČINKOVITA VLADAVINA ODRŽIVIM RAZVOJEM: ANALIZA VLADAVINE PO PRAVILIMA I CILJEVIMA ZA OSTVARIVANJE UN AGENDE 2030

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Agenda Ciljevi održivog razvoja (SDG) Ujedinjenih naroda usvojena je 2015. godine s planom postizanja tih ciljeva do 2030. godine. S obzirom na to da je preostalo manje od 6 godina, potrebna je učinkovita vladavina radi provedbe i provođenja politika održivog razvoja. Učinkovita vladavina ciljevima održivog razvoja ključna je za globalnu održivost. U ovom se radu istražuju područja vladavine u kojima je postignut napredak u održivom razvoju te analizira kako bi ta područja mogla potaknuti veću transformaciju. Glavni cilj rada je doprinijeti raspravi o konceptualizaciji i provođenju učinkovite vladavine održivim razvojem u kontekstu Agende 2030 i ciljeva održivog razvoja. U radu se predstavljaju vrijedne perspektive o razvoju sustava vladavine koji su i učinkoviti i fleksibilni, čime se rješavaju prepreke koje su ometale napredak prema postizanju ciljeva održivog razvoja. U radu se analiziraju dva modela vladavine za ostvarivanje ciljeva održivog razvoja: vladavina po pravilima i vladavina po ciljevima. Vladavina po pravilima temelji se na formalnim zakonima i jasnim normama što osigurava predvidljivost, ali ograničava fleksibilnost. Vladavina po ciljevima uspostavlja široke ciljeve ne propisujući specifične metode njihova ostvarivanja što potiče inovativnost, ali potencijalno vodi do neujednačenog provođenja. Provođenjem temeljite komparativne analize, rad skreće pozornost na jakosti i slabosti oba modela. Vladavina po pravilima prikladna je u situacijama koje zahtijevaju precizne propise, dok je vladavina po ciljevima učinkovitija u situacijama suočavanja sa složenim i prilagodljivim izazovima. U radu se istražuju nužni uvjeti za uspješnu provedbu oba modela, razmatrajući čimbenike kao što su institucionalni kapacitet i uključenost dionika. U radu se daju smjernice za optimizaciju okvira vladavine za ostvarivanje ciljeva održivog razvoja.

Ključne riječi: ciljevi održivog razvoja, globalna vladavina, vladavina po pravilima, vladavina po ciljevima.