

2nd Consultation Report

Bouncing Forward Sustainably: Pathways to a post-COVID World Governance for Sustainability

Reinhard Mechler (mechler@iiasa.ac.at), Anne-Sophie Stevance (Anne-Sophie.STEVANCE@council.science), Teresa M. Deubelli (deubelli@iiasa.ac.at)

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Abstract

COVID-19 has once again brought the role of governments, and their ability to cooperate and coordinate their actions into the spotlight. It has however also highlighted significant gaps in various areas including the science-policy interface; the ability of institutional mechanisms to deal with crises; in the preparedness of global and national science communities and government systems; and in access to reliable, verifiable data to inform decision making.

The consultative meetings around this topic draw on lessons learned and experiences from the COVID-19 pandemic to identify effective policy tools and mechanisms that would also give due credence to issues of poverty alleviation, justice, inequalities, and the environment. The goal is to suggest pathways for more robust and responsive governance systems for an uncertain future.

This report gives a summary over the discussions in the second consultative meeting that took place online, on July 27, 2020.

About the authors

Reinhard Mechler is the Acting Director of the Risk & Resilience research program at the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA) (Contact: mechler@iiasa.ac.at)

Anne-Sophie Stevance is a Senior Science Officer at the International Science Council (ISC) (Contact: Anne-Sophie.STEVANCE@council.science)

Teresa M. Deubelli is a Researcher with the Risk & Resilience research program at the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA) (Contact: deubelli@iiasa.ac.at)

Acknowledgments

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Report of the 2nd Consultation on Governance for Sustainability

Agenda (all CEST)		
14:00-14:05	Welcome	Flavia Schlegel
14:05-14:10	Introduction and objectives	Chair: Adebayo Olukoshi
14:10-14:15	Overview of the meeting	Teresa M. Deubelli
14:15-14:45	Lightning talks & tour de table <i>Options for improving governance for sustainability in a post-Covid-19 world?</i>	Reinhard Mechler Maria Ivanova Dirk Messner
14:45-15:45	Breakout room discussions: <i>Co-designing options for enhanced governance</i>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Breakout Room 1: Options for enhanced global governance 	Maria Ivanova Teresa M. Deubelli
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Breakout Room 2: Options for enhanced national and sub-national governance 	Gordon McBean Reinhard Mechler
15:45-16:15	Plenary Discussion	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Share options from focus group 1 and 2 Synthesis: Selection of key options 	Adebayo Olukoshi
16:15-16:30	Next steps and closing remarks	Leena Srivastava

Overview

The second consultation on 'Governance for Sustainability' gathered 24 leading experts (17 external and 7 IIASA-ISC) from Asia, Africa, Latin-America, and Europe.

Approach and Framing

Building on overall approach and the 1st consultation, the IIASA/ISC team engaged with the experts to identify a set of policy options at global and national systems governance levels. While the first consultation focused on drawing lessons from how COVID-19 has been governed at different levels of governance, the second consultation focused on identifying options and opportunities for enhancing governance in support of realizing sustainability objectives. Key questions targeted in the second consultation included: What change in governance arrangements – at different levels- is needed to unlock a move towards sustainable futures in a post-COVID-19 world? What new models of cooperation are available at different levels? What role for systemic resilience in governance arrangements?

In addressing these questions, participants understand governance as the “totality of actors, rules, conventions, processes and mechanisms concerned with how relevant...information is collected, analysed and communicated, and how management decisions are taken”¹ and that may take different shapes, such as polycentric, network, multilevel, monocentric or adaptive governance.

Summary of discussions: Lightning talks

The lightning talks set the stage for the consultation, providing considerations and lines of thought for the discussions later on in the breakout groups where the focus moved towards identifying options for enhancing governance for sustainability that may be put forward.

Maria Ivanova of the University of Massachusetts at Boston expounded a need for innovating the international governance system, originally conceived in the aftermath of World War II to respond to the challenges of the Cold War but by now inefficient to respond to the challenges of the 21st century. The new type of threats and challenges require a global governance reform towards governance arrangements that are better suited to govern today’s and future challenges around sustainability transitions (gradual, policy-led change) and transformations (radical change throughout). She highlighted that such governance arrangements need to embrace a much larger and more diverse range of actors and stakeholders, embracing global interconnectedness and solidarity across sectoral, cultural and economic divides. Digital technologies can be a useful tool for shaping new avenues for such inclusive, polycentric governance; as can be foresight provisions (as e.g. tried with the Future Earth Network) that can inform inclusive decision-making.

Dirk Messner, President of the German Environment Agency, started his lightning talk cautioning that global challenges such as Covid-19 might result in new global divides. He suggested that in deliberating opportunities and options for enhancing governance at different levels, three different layers need to be considered: power constellations, cognitive concepts as decision-making drivers and political settings and institutions. He observed two positive trends: i) power shifts towards sustainability are ongoing with the number of 'green' actors growing and new actor constellations being constituted; ii) cognitive concepts around transformation are increasingly becoming mainstream and, as very relevant for Covid-19, ‘the

¹ IRGC (International Risk Governance Council). 2005. Risk governance: Towards an integrative approach. White Paper No. 1, O. Renn with an Annex by P. Graham. Geneva: IRGC.

improbably becoming plausible and mainstream.’ Dirk Messner also suggested that investments into sustainability constituted a good part of EU’s Covid-19 recovery program, yet the program and implementation will need to focus on supporting relevant transformations more strongly (such as decarbonization). While acknowledging the counter movements prevalent in many of our societies, he noted that we are at an important crossroads towards governance arrangements that enable transformations towards more sustainable futures going forward – it will be key to make use of these.

BREAKOUT GROUPS

In the breakout groups, participants were asked to provide their insights to identify pathways and options for enhancing governance for sustainability, recognizing the need for buy-in at the relevant respective decision-making levels. In doing so, participants built on the findings and lessons emerging from the first consultation that included a need for more coordinated, cooperative and solidarity-based global governance arrangements and for polycentric and adaptive governance structures at national and sub-national governance levels, along with an emphasis of accountable and transparent arrangements informed by reliable science-policy-society interfaces and a centre-stage positioning of systemic resilience to bounce forward in sustainable development.

BREAKOUT GROUP 1: Global governance.

The Global Governance group discussed options and opportunities for innovation and enhancement of global governance arrangements. The key question guiding the conversation was how global governance arrangements can be transformed at global scale to shift development towards sustainable and resilient pathways in view of increasing compound and systemic risk. Participants structured their suggestions into options for institutional reform, opportunities for building on conventions and the current drive for implementation and opportunities for leveraging process-related change potential.

In terms of options for institutional reform, participants in the breakout group agreed that there is a need to devise a council mandated to coordinate and respond to the compounding risks and crises facing the global community in today’s world. Similar in terms of institutional ranking to the UN Security Council, such a newly devised council would need to be mandated as a coordination mechanism for global human security and resilience challenges, including issues related to climate change, biodiversity and poverty reduction, with view to filling the perceived gap in global cooperation and competition of multiple agendas and mandates. Some participants also suggested that there would be value in mainstreaming resilience considerations into existing global governance arrangements in appreciation of the time lag and need for global buy-in linked to creating new institutions. The WHO, which naturally took the lead in coordinating the global response to the pandemic was well noted, including for its integrated local support, but was named as an example for an organisation that may benefit from further working towards common policy direction that appreciates emergency as routine. In terms of benefitting from the momentum surrounding important conventions that are currently at a stage where implementation is the ask of the day (such as the Paris Agreement), participants suggested that this offers an opportunity for transformation of global governance where a more integrated action can take place. In terms of leveraging process-related change potential, participants in the group suggested that there are some low-hanging fruits for enhancing global governance arrangements, ranging from better inclusion of experts’ insights through ad-hoc advisory boards at global levels to logging into value-orientation in society (changes in norms/beliefs) and local knowledge

at global level to translate leadership across scales towards transformation. As some countries and actors may lead and others may follow latter, the group overall suggested to build on a notion of concentric circles of governance.

BREAKOUT GROUP 2: National governance.

Answering to the guiding question of how national governance arrangements can be enhanced at national scales to shift development towards sustainable and resilient pathways in view of increasing compound and systemic risk, the National Governance group, inspired by Dirk Messner's input, identified good synergies between greening and resilience dialogues in terms of opportunities for stepping beyond concepts of climate and resource efficiency to well consider redundancy, resourcefulness and inclusion. The 'Green Economy' and 'Building Back Better' discourses may thus provide good entry point for alignment and support for implementation around attributes of green, inclusive and resilient. The group further identified economic governance and capacity as key as well as a major impediment to transformations and resilience. Covid-19 here revealed major bottlenecks in many countries, including Latin America. Generally, as discussed in the group, the informal economy has not been well considered as part of Covid-19 responses so far, which calls for reform. As a positive example, participants debated Japan's Covid-19 recovery plan framed as 'Economy 5.0' which aims at considering the SDG explicitly and well integrating a human (capital) perspective. In an economy that is quickly transforming this approach thus may well support building people-centred systems' resilience. Finally, the discussion led into questioning how science can support or even act as a transformation agent by upgrading science communication and collaboration with activists.

Plenary discussion & Next steps

The plenary reported back from the break-out groups, providing an opportunity for reactions and commentary from all participants. Several participants made use of the opportunity to highlight the need to consider aspects such as gender, age and other social strata in any governance innovations towards sustainability.

Moving towards the third and final consultation, the IIASA-ISC team will continue to work on updating the working report with the expert input and considerations with view to featuring a chapter in the final report coming out of the IIASA-ISC Consultative Science Platform "Bouncing Forward Sustainably: Pathways to a post-COVID World". In terms of advancing to the third consultation, the IIASA-ISC team will build on the options deliberated in the second consultation with view to developing exercises for testing suggested options for enhancing governance towards sustainability under different scenarios and contexts.

Participants of the online consultation

Chair:

Adebayo Olukoshi, Director for Africa and West Asia at the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA)

Participants:

Mario Abela, Director – Redefining Value, WBCSD

Teresa M. Deubelli, Researcher, Risk and Resilience, IIASA

Felix Dodds, Consultant, Stakeholder engagement in global sustainability processes

Comfort Ero, Program Director Africa, International Crisis Group

Joseph Foti, Chief Research Officer, Open Government Partnership

Luis Gomez Echeverri, Emeritus Research Scholar, DDG for Science, IIASA

Marc Gordon, Head of UNISDR's Global Risk Analysis and Reporting Unit at UNDRR

Maria Ivanova, Associate Professor, Director of Center for Governance & Sustainability; Director of the Global Environmental Governance Project at University of Massachusetts Boston

Anna Korotkova, Deputy Director for International Collaboration of Federal Research Institute for Health Organization and Informatics, Ministry of Health of the Russian Federation, Head of the WHO Collaboration Centre on health systems and public health

Georgios Kostakos, Co-founder, Foundation for Global Governance and Sustainability (FOGGS)

Joanne Linnerooth Bayer, Emeritus Research Scholar, Risk and Resilience, IIASA

Wei Liu, Senior Economist at Luohan Academy

Gordon McBean, Professor Emeritus Department of Geography at Western University London

Colin McQuistan, Senior Policy and Practice Adviser, DRR and Climate Change at Practical Action

Reinhard Mechler, Programme Director, Risk and Resilience, IIASA

Dirk Messner, President at German Environment Agency

Luckystar Miyandazi, Policy Officer African Institutions and Regional Dynamics Programme, European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDPM)

Jack Radisch, Senior project manager of the OECD High Level Risk Forum at OECD

Michaela Rossini, Head of the Library and Knowledge Resources Unit, IIASA

Thomas Schinko, Deputy Programme Director, Risk and Resilience, IIASA

Flavia Schlegel, Special Envoy for Science in Global Policy, International Science Council (ISC)

Pia Johanna Schweitzer, Research Group Leader at IASS

Rajib Shaw, Professor, Graduate School of Media and Governance at Keio University

Leena Srivastava, Deputy Director General for Science, IIASA

Ricardo Zapata-Marti, International Consultant