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Regional Civil Society Engagement and Governance in Agenda 2030: Liberation at last?

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Abstract of Dissertation

Submitted by: Simon Høiberg OLSEN for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy and entitled: Regional Civil Society Engagement and Governance in Agenda 2030: Liberation at last?

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This dissertation examines regional civil society engagement with the SDGs to identify current trends in the sustainable development discourse. It uses Foucauldian governmentality as an analytical lens to trace the discourses and narratives that compete, contest and combine in regional SDGs processes in Asia and the Pacific. Based on text analysis, participant observation and interviews, the dissertation compares rationalities and techniques of governing in official global and regional SDG tracks with a regional grassroots civil society engagement platform's engagement with the process in the period 2014-2018. The dissertation finds that the SDGs continue the sustainable development discourse's compromise between economic growth and environmental conservation; structural impediments to sustainability largely go unmentioned in favor of promoting advanced liberal and neoliberal approaches to governing for sustainability. But the advanced liberal governmentalities that lay the base for the SDGs' voluntary 'governing by goals' also open the playing field allowing grassroots voices to enter and engage with official SDG processes in the region. Their engagement and resistance to the full SDG narrative legitimize regional SDGs process and the intergovernmental system. The 'mainstreaming' of marginalised actors and voices into the SDGs processes compromises their resistance but also contributes important language to the evolving discourse. The dissertation contributes to the field of governmentality studies of international processes and casts light on the power dynamics of multistakeholder engagement in Agenda 2030.

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Keywords: Governmentality; sustainable development goals; civil society engagement; Asia-Pacific

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List of Abbreviations

ADB	Asian Development Bank
ADA	Asian Development Alliance
AG	Advisory Group
APFSD	Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development
AP-RCEM	Asia-Pacific Regional Civil Society Engagement Mechanism
APWLD	Asia-Pacific Forum on Women Law and Development
ASEF	Asia-Europe Environment Forum
CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
CDR	Carbon Dioxide Removal
CO2	Carbon Dioxide
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DESA	Department on Economic and Social Affairs
DJ	Development Justice
ECE	Economic Commission for Europe
EGM	Expert Group Meeting
ESCAP	Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
EU	European Union
FPIC	Free Prior and Informed Consent
FUR	Follow-up and Review
GCAP	Global Call to Action Against Poverty
HLPF	High Level Political Forum
HQ	Headquarters
ISDS	Investor State Dispute Settlement
IGES	Institute for Global Environmental Strategies
INGO	International Non-governmental Organization
IPs	Indigenous Peoples
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
LGBTIQ	Lesbian, Gay, Bi, Transsexual, Intersexual and Queer
MEA	Multilateral Environmental Agreement
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MG	Major Group
MOI	Means of Implementation
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NEDA	National Economic Development Authority
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
NSDS	National Sustainable Development Strategies
NYC	New York
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OWG	Open Working Group
PPPs	Public-private partnerships
RCC	Regional Coordination Committee
RIM	Regional Implementation Meeting
SD	Sustainable Development
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SDTF	Sustainable Development Transition Forum
SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency

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STI	Science, Technology and Innovation
TFWW	The Future We Want
TOR	Terms of Reference
UN	United Nations
UNE	United Nations Environment
UNEA	United Nations Environment Assembly
UNEP	United Nations Environment Program
UNOSD	United Nations Office on Sustainable Development
VNR	Voluntary National Review
WG	Working Group
WW2	Second World War
WSSD	World Summit on Sustainable Development
WTO	World Trade Organization

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"The SDGs will not be implemented by the powerful. The powerful would be less powerful if the SDGs are achieved. Instead the SDGs will have to be constantly pushed for and battled for by those who have been left behind."

Overheard during 2018 Peoples' Forum in Bangkok.

Chapter 1: Governing the SDGs

1.1. Introduction

With increasing urgency, science and the international community highlight the need for the world to transform its development towards sustainability. CO2 content in the atmosphere in 2018 was 410ppm, higher than any time in the past 400,000 years (NASA, 2018). Concurrently the world is breaking heat records year by year; reports of droughts and wildfires in one place compete with record floods and landslides in others, together threatening the global insurance industry's ability to cope with the increasing costs of climate impacts and spurring increasing public debate and protest by citizens concerned about the suitability of our dominant economic system to tackle the disasters.

Global biodiversity loss is now occurring at 100 times the natural rate (UNEP, 2014), most of it caused directly or indirectly by human impact. Globally over 815 million people remain hungry or malnourished (FAO, 2017), and almost half the world's population survives on less than 2.50 USD per day (UN, 2018). Against that backdrop inequality keeps rising, with 82% of globally generated wealth going to just one percent of the global population (Oxfam, 2018). The exponential convergence of environmental and socioeconomic trends, also

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dubbed the *Great Acceleration*, risks introducing a collapse of life support systems globally and locally (Steffen, Broadgate, Deutsch, Gaffney, & Ludwig, 2015). Given the scale, speed, complexity and unparalleled severity of these changes - a transformation is necessary.

Without a serious transformation towards sustainability it is questionable how long human civilization can continue to exist in its current makeup. The international community conceived the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the 2030 Development Agenda in recognition of this, and as the most recent iteration of sustainable development –build on, but go beyond Agenda 21 in terms of specificity. But how are current systems and people using the SDGs to push for such a reorientation, or is there a risk that they are merely reproducing the approaches that have led to the problems we are facing?

In the form of goals, targets and indicators, the SDGs and their encompassing agenda entitled *Transforming our World* (United Nations General Assembly, 2015a) provide a navigational guide with a vision for countries to follow to provide well-being to the people based on more just and sustainable development. Sustainable development has been promoted for several decades, unfortunately without sufficiently reversing or adequately slowing the overall worrisome trends. Incremental changes have happened, but they are not enough. As a policy framework, sustainable development has not required ideological change, wherefore some have argued that in this context, neoliberal approaches to growth and deregulation have prevailed (Harvey, 2007). This begs the question how the uptake of the SDGs then would cause anything different than

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earlier attempts at creating a sustainable development transformation? This dissertation posits that the SDGs are a product of the liberal world order, containing many techniques of governing in their architecture (some of which are neoliberal) that to an extent might reproduce the very problems the goals intend to solve. However, these elements may also facilitate access and influence by actors and voices that contest the neoliberal elements and instead push to maintain the radical and transformative potential of Agenda 2030. The extent to which such actors successfully contest and create impacts acting at international levels to cause positive effects at national and local levels is a key point of contention which this research examines. The research uses governmentality as analytical lens to understand how power moves through subjectification of ideas (rationalities and techniques) among actors. The analysis lays the base for subsequent examination of subjectification and resistance of certain rationalities in the SDGs as exemplified by the case study of a particular civic engagement initiative and its interaction with the official SDG space at the Asia-Pacific regional level. The researched case promoted a 'liberatory approach' to counter the neoliberal narrative 'enacted vis-à-vis other forms of governmentality underlying competing programs and strategies' (Fletcher, 2017) in the Asia-Pacific region. The extent to which such liberatory approach would persevere in the meeting with predominant discourses and forms of power would indicate the transformative potential of the now well-established SDGs.

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1.2. Context and Rationale of the Research

In the early 1970s the Club of Rome and its seminal publication *Limits to Growth* predicted how rapid, unsustainable growth across different areas ultimately leads to collapse (Meadows et al., 1972). Similarly, the Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment in 1972 recognized impacts of human activity on the environment and made some institutional headway towards multilateral environmental action by establishing the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP). In the early 1980s the International Union for Nature Conservation (IUCN) introduced the concept 'sustainable development', and it entered the global policy arena with the Brundtland Commissions report *Our Common Future* in 1987, the onus of its definition focusing on "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (Brundtland, 1987, P.41).

Since then, large summits with important declarations and agendas have followed to generate action around sustainable development, arguably with less success than is required (Brand, 2012). The global governance apparatus that these summits first established and then reaffirmed have disappointed some observers due to lack of meaningful impact (Park, Conca, & Finger, 2008) and have been accused of creating their own detached industry that "kicks the can down the road" (Foreign Affairs, 2012) rather than making decisive changes. To understand why sustainable development has not happened as envisioned, the concept has been criticized for being too broad (Hove, 2004), or ill defined (Phillis & Andriantiatsaholiniaina, 2001). A large literature on sustainable

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development governance has also faulted the implementation gap of sustainable development to be due to the prevalence of sectoral approaches to governance and public management that fails to account for economic, social and environmental interlinkages in planning and implementation (Boas, Biermann, & Kanie, 2016). While broad definitions and sector-focused institutional architectures may partly explain the lack of action, others have pointed out that the persistent implementation gap of sustainability is caused by conflicts between peoples' world-views and priorities on how sustainable development is supposed to come about (Hedlund-de Witt, 2014; van Egmond & de Vries, 2011), and that the concept's virtuous marriage between economic growth and environmental conservation is an illusive and unattainable image, in which dominant powers continue their hegemony through the weakness of the systems and structures that were created to facilitate change (Dasgupta, 2011; Tulloch & Neilson, 2014).

In accordance with the different explanations for inadequate progress towards sustainable development, the proposed approaches to govern for sustainable development have emphasized different solutions. The well-known known approach of 'Global Environmental Governance' (GEG) (Najam et al., 2006) has emphasized collective action based on (often international) institutional arrangements. Examples include the UN conventions on biodiversity, desertification, and climate change, which were key outcomes of the 1992 Earth Summit (Nations, 1992). Despite those international instruments, the last two decades have shown increasing degradation in the areas these conventions were designed to address and has caused some to increasingly call the effectiveness of

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the GEG approach into question (Chambers, 2008; Park et al., 2008); a critique that more recently has become more direct diagnosing a crisis of the multilateral system that lays the foundation for this type of governing (Gowan, 2018).

A decade after the Rio Earth Summit, the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development and its Johannesburg Plan of Implementation called for countries to develop National Sustainable Development Strategies (NSDS) (Nations, 2002). More than 170 countries drafted such plans, but few were ever fully implemented (Meadowcroft, 2007; Olsen & Zusman, 2013). The same summit also promoted multistakeholder partnerships (Type II), which were hailed as innovative and important means of implementation (Hens & Nath, 2003). However, critical voices lamented that such partnerships were merely a way for governments to abdicate their responsibilities for sustainable development to the private sector (Witte, Streck, & Benner, 2003).

A decade later the Rio+20 conference in 2012 focused on an 'Institutional Framework for Sustainable Development' and 'A Green Economy in the Context of Poverty Eradication and Sustainable Development'. The first theme implied that problems and solutions should be recognised and approached by management and institutional design with the intention that the right 'Institutional Framework for Sustainable Development' would bring balanced integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development. The second theme implied that the economy could be greened and become a vessel to achieve sustainable development.

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Regarding the first theme, proponents of a stronger institutionalization of sustainable development at the international level focused on advocating an upgrade of the global review structure under the UN from a Commission on Sustainable Development to a Sustainable Development Council to increase its legal and political power (Beisheim, Lode, & Simon, 2012). This was not accommodated, and instead governments agreed on creating a so-called High Level Political Forum (HLPF) to review progress on sustainable development annually under the auspices of the UN. This forum, however, recently came under fire for omitting the word 'political' in its title, by lacking functions to promote accountability between and among countries of their lacking performance on the SDGs and for not having been equipped with a mandate related to implementation, capacity building or resource mobilization (Center for Economic and Social Rights, 2018), and instead becoming a roadshow for governments to promote their countries as tourist destinations (Observation, 2018).

Rio+20's second main theme, the focus on a green economy, signified that the focus on private and business sector involvement that had played a role in Johannesburg's focus on Type II partnerships in 2002 remained an important tool (or governance technique) for sustainable development. Whilst several UN bodies, especially UNEP, had promoted this approach, governing for sustainable development by logic and rationality of the market commodified nature and made the market economy a solution for the problems it had caused itself (Bina, 2013; Dasgupta, 2011). In Rio, governments did not produce any conventions or binding agreements for these thematic tracks but agreed on a process to define a

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development agenda and a set of SDGs to follow, where the exiting Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) concluded in 2015 (United Nations, 2012, para. 245).

The most inclusive global consultation to date (Kharas, 2015; United Nations, 2014, 2015) then formulated a proposal for the SDGs. The inclusiveness allowed diverse voices to access and influence the process, a precedent that perhaps would be more important than initially anticipated, as discussed in later chapters. Consultations and negotiations between 2013 and 2015 produced a set of 17 universal and integrated goals with 169 targets that were agreed with much fanfare at a UN Summit in 2015 based on a declaration and a UN resolution entitled 'Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" (United Nations General Assembly, 2015a).

This new agenda had potential - for some even a 'radical' potential (Death & Gabay, 2015), because they governed through voluntary, global and universal goals (Biermann, Kanie, & Kim, 2017), which was a form of governing inspired by the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Unlike the SDGs, the MDGs were not global but merely "…our agenda for them" (Saith & Ashwani, 2006, p. 1184). In comparison with the MDGs, the formulation of the SDGs itself was also significant. Where the MDGs had been a result of an exclusive and technocratic consultation (Vandemoortele, 2011), the SDGs were a product of a very inclusive deliberative process, perhaps cumbersome, but which created strong ownership of the process and its outcomes. Moreover, where the SDGs had goals on inequality that provided space to challenge structural barriers to sustainability (Chapters 4, 5), the had MDGs approached development in a reductionist and

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outcome driven way that had largely omitted any structural barriers to sustainable development (Fukuda-Parr & Hulme, 2011; Sumner & Tiwari, 2010). In that sense, the SDGs represented a potential break from viewing development as something the 'north' is doing to the 'south' towards a universal and globally agreed agenda.

The voluntary nature of the 2030 Agenda as well as its use of goals, targets, and indicators to influence behavior is less reliant on promulgation of laws and regulations (although these would have to happen at national levels with national and local goals and targets). Instead it is more reliant on the power of a universal agreement to create a global social contract and steer government and stakeholder behavior in a desired direction. Such 'governance by goals' (Kanie & Biermann, 2017), resembles advanced liberal forms of governing or forms of 'governmentality', which is an approach introduced by Foucault in his lectures on governmentality (Gordon, 1991).

In the case of the SDGs' advanced liberal forms of governing, the steering effect is achieved by generating knowledge about the state of societies and the environment, which is based on countries' reporting against the targets using indicators (or national interpretations of those indicators) in the regular voluntary national reviews (VNRs) at the global HLPF. Reporting against targets and indicators is not new per se, but has been used for the MDGs, and indicators were also proposed for progress tracking in Agenda 21, but combining indicators with goals and targets is new for sustainable development governance.

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While the SDGs do embody this emphasis on advanced liberal forms of governing (or governmentalities), the 2030 Agenda continues to emphasize other rationalities, including a reaffirmation of the importance of national sovereignty and the powers executed by sovereign states. On the flipside, however, the 2030 Agenda also plays strongly into neoliberal governance rationalities, signified through calls for engaging the private sector and relying on the power of markets to drive towards more sustainable societies, and more subversively through the logic and technique of 'goals' that create competition and rallies everyone's buy-in through the creation of broad ownership rather than relying only on command-and-control.

This thesis examines current efforts at governing for sustainable development that confront and collide in the negotiations around the SDGs, exemplified by how a civil society platform in the Asia-Pacific region has resisted and embraced different elements of the 2030 Agenda. In doing so, it examines the tensions between different forms of governing that have been proposed and opposed in 'negotiations' around the SDGs by taking a governmentality approach to the analysis of the SDGs and a chosen set of civil society actors in the context of their interactions with the UN and governments, and each other. Governmentality, originally coined by Foucault (1991) in the late 1970s as a tool to describe how states use different techniques and justifications to govern the 'conduct of conduct' (Bevir, 2010), has since been rediscovered through later translations of his lectures on the subject to encompass a broader meaning of government and management through various modalities, by various actors and justified by different rationalities (Michel Foucault, 2008). The theoretical approach focusing

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on power and the analytical lens provided by the governmentality framework has also been applied to research in the area of environmental governance and natural resource management (Agrawal, 2005; Jepson, Brannstrom, & Persons, 2012).

Foucault argued that different rationalities and types of governing are not separate, but "overlap, lean on each other, challenge each other, and struggle with each other" (Michel Foucault, 2008, p. 313), thereby constituting the politics of power. These different ways of governing, which can be identified by their rather distinct rationalities and highlighted problems and solutions (techniques and technologies of governing) are examined (explicated below) in so far as they relate to 'advanced liberal' (Rose & Miller, 2008), 'disciplinary' (Agrawal, 2005), 'sovereign', and 'liberation' (Fletcher, 2017) types of power reflected in key documents and negotiations around the SDGs.

Governmentality is an analytical approach to analysing the interplays of power and the more fine-grained contestation of worldviews, exposed in adherence to different ways of governing that happen in political processes (Fletcher, 2017). In addition to forming an analytical lens of inquiry, governmentality itself also encompasses the 'art of governing' indirectly by steering the 'conduct of conduct' (Dean, 2010) by looking at the emerging subjectivities (or identities) that prompt individuals to act in accordance or opposition to certain ends and objectives of an agenda. The paragraphs below provide a brief introduction to the characteristic rationalities and techniques that can be found within different approaches to governing and which can help analyse the politics of the SDGs.

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An **'advanced liberal' (or neoliberal)** rationality can be recognised by its emphasis on the potential for the market to incentivise action on sustainability. Different literature both within and beyond the UN promotes such action. Examples range from using pure economic rationality to calculate the costs and benefits of delivering on sustainable development (Lomborg, 2007). More nuanced but related approaches promote payments for ecosystem services that have also found backing with the UN (TEEB, 2010), and formed the core rationality of the focus on partnerships at the WSSD as well as the broader green economy agenda.

This rationality relies on voluntary reporting, partnerships, creation of competition and other techniques to govern. And while its proponents argue that the potential for private sector involvement in sustainable development can unleash millions of dollars of funding (Lomborg, 2015), critical voices do not find much evidence of this; projects remain small and mainly donor funded even though the economics terminology (rationality) has thoroughly permeated the debate (Dempsey & Suarez, 2016). Critique against this approach sees the wholesale pricing of environmental goods and services as a commodification of nature that allows the rich to access resources that the poor cannot afford (Latorre, Farrell, & Martínez-Alier, 2015); and indiscriminate involvement of the private sector has been labelled as green washing and hijacking of the sustainability agenda to less noble ends (Martin, 2014). Although often accused (perhaps rightly) of various social and environmental ills that have befallen our society, the advanced liberal (or neoliberal) approach to governance also has

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some potential. It widens the playing field to allow contestation because it is not a closed project but is rather permeable precisely because it relies on competition as a form of governing, which invites different individuals, groups to enter and compete for space on a negotiation stage (Larner 2000), but at a cost that not everyone can afford.

The advanced liberal (or neoliberal) rationality is a product of the liberal world order, which created free trade and open markets, and by extension – globalisation and its global institutions. At the more liberal than neoliberal side of the spectrum it is also indirectly connected (and promoted by) institutions and natural resource management approaches that derive from this world order as essential for environmental governance. Examples include Oran Young's track record of work on international institutions (Young, 2014), or the Earth System Governance framework (Biermann et al., 2010), which have proposed several ways of strengthening the institutional framework for sustainable development. Based on the global movement of norms, the entire United Nations (UN) is a product of the liberal world order and its functions to a large extent depend on it. It is different from neoliberalism, which can be a political or an economic theory that takes the 'free markets' approach to the extreme, arguing that state control at sovereign, or by proxy at levels of the UN, is unnecessary and increases inefficiency of the economy (see Chapter 2 for more in-depth discussion). While institutionalists (and the UN) have made significant contributions to environmental governance and have broadened the understanding and analysis of environmental governance, they have also been criticised for assuming that an

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overt focus on institutions and trust can make up for structural reasons for inaction that then are not sufficiently addressed (Forsyth & Johnson, 2014).

The **sovereign** rationality to governing derives from Foucault's earliest treatment of power and is based on laws, regulations, the ability to punish, and encompasses techniques of power exclusively available to governments (Foucault, 1977). In the case of sustainable development, this research found that this form of governing is often intertwined with the advanced liberal one. For example, sovereign types of government constitute a necessary backbone of the multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs), which countries have conceived, negotiated, and ratified. A large body of literature and epistemic community focusing on 'environmental governance' has contributed to debates from this stand point, trying to promote stronger international and national governance regimes, in particular focusing on how the MEAs can be taken into action (Esty & Ivanova, 2002; Kanie, 2007). While the MEAs are important part of environmental governance, overt reliance on them has been criticised for removing already scarce resources for implementation from the national level (Najam et al., 2006).

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Disciplinary power and its related rationalities and techniques of governing is a backbone to all forms of governing from sovereign, through neoliberal. It governs through creation and application of norms, codes of conduct and standards. Foucault saw this form of power as pre-existing the sovereign and advanced liberal forms, where feudal societies governed by installing a certain discipline among their populace, largely effectuated by the prospects of

punishment if this discipline were not adhered to (Foucault, 1977). In more recent times, we can recognise the disciplinary type of governing in techniques of governing such as factory bells, time schedules, accreditations to UN meetings, and more broadly, through the extension of soft power that is evident in the norms promoted by the SDGs.

A more recently discussed type of power is the **'liberation'** type and its distinct rationalities and techniques (Fletcher 2017, 2010). Its mission of liberation from injustices differentiates it from other more hegemonic rationalities to governing. As solutions to the problems caused by structural inequalities its rationalities rely on justice and rights. This rationality is most often promoted by civil society groups, which represent marginalised communities, and those that have been 'left behind' in development endeavours. It is particularly useful for the analysis of the politics in the SDGs and sustainable development, because it represents the transformative potential ascribed to the goals. In the context of sustainable development and the SDGs, such rationality has been present in the OWG process through wide engagement with civil society organisations (CSOs). Its 'liberation' potential has received little attention to date, as the people who use it often come from the marginalised segments of society, and are often shunned as not 'expert' enough to justify full access to processes that are often quite hierarchic, 'professional' and relying on other technocratic techniques to govern. This type of governing, however, is beginning to draw attention in areas of local governance generally (Haller, Acciaioli, & Rist, 2016) and can arguable be recognised in the 'radical potential' of the SDGs (Death & Gabay, 2015).

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In extension of the political economy aspect of conflicting interests and approaches to governing for sustainable development that tamper with effective implementation of sustainable development, many explanations can arguably be traced back to a *difference in rationality of how problems are defined and what types of governing are promoted as solutions*. This thesis therefore explores the roots and identifies the dominant features of contemporary types of governing that are promoted within the SDGs and conversations around the 2030 Agenda. It does so to see how and whether governing is reconceptualised to provide space for the radical and empowering potential of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs. Such examination will tell us whether (or how) the most recent iteration of sustainable development in the SDGs is likely to make transformative change from business-as-usual or not, and, more importantly as exemplified by the case of the CSO engagement platform which is the case study of this research, *how radical elements enter the negotiations around the SDGs and influence the discourse and how and whether these elements in turn are influenced by other forms of, or actors with, power*.

It is necessary here to write a short explanation on the use of terminology in this dissertation. Generally in the sustainable development literature, steering the conduct of states and stakeholders in a desired direction is almost without exception labeled 'governance'. However to break this type of 'governance' down into different shades I will use the term 'governance' only for liberal types of governing, whereas the term 'governing' will be used to cover other rationalities and techniques of governing. I make this distinction as a nod to existing literature (Jessop, 2005) that differentiates between the terms, arguing that the

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widespread use of the term 'governance' really shows how advanced liberal rationalities and governing techniques have successfully mainstreamed as dominant rationality of governing in environment and sustainable development fields, assuming that "… political decisions are based on neutral facts or rational arguments, thereby ignoring the role of strategic options and political alternatives" (Lemke, 2007, p. 14) The extent to which the term 'governance' is already the most widely used term in the analysis of different types of governing and decision-making in the field of sustainable development illustrates the relative successes of the advanced liberal approach having been able to permeate and normalize its rationalities and techniques in field of governing sustainable development.

1.3. Research Questions, Aims and Contributions

The above discussion argued that the SDGs differ somewhat from earlier iterations of sustainable development governance because of their integrated nature, the inclusive process surrounding their creation, and the voluntary characteristics that do not prescribe a pre-defined pathway of action to meet the goals. Given this inherent flexibility, *a key question is how actors influence/are influenced by (reproduce existing power dynamics or change the debate and positions of) the official 'SDG-track'.* To that end, the research examined the governmentalities promoted by the SDGs, and by actors who engage in specific processes in the Asia-Pacific region. The analysis identified different preferences for certain types of government as distinguished between 'official' SDG tracks and less official processes of engagement with the SDGs, especially those involving non-state actors. While this exercise did not provide any hard and fast

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proposals on how to bridge the persistent implementation gaps, it provided a diagnosis of the current picture of how the SDGs govern and are governed by different competing narratives and can hint at whether or not the transformative potential of the SDGs is being fulfilled.

It is important to keep in mind that the SDGs represent an ideal view of a sustainable world, where 'no-one is left behind', and where the multilateral system is functioning. But multilateralism's heydays probably were in the late 1980s and 1990s, well before 9-11; a period characterized by the end of the Cold War, the reunification of Germany, collapse of the Soviet Union, and other events that signified the pervasiveness of Western liberalism (Fukuyama, 1992). Even Fukuyama realized in hindsight that that decade had not 'ended' history (Fukuyama, 2018), but had gradually given way to a more chaotic, complex and increasingly multipolar world that seems easily divided rather than rallying around a set of universal SDGs. Recently several countries begin to embrace populism, nationalism, and isolationism rather than the global solidarity necessary to achieve the global social contract of the SDGs. We need thus to note the above forces are a significant counter-trend to the global liberal project that has both created the challenges to sustainable development, but ironically also gave birth to the SDGs. This tension that 'radical' and transformative demands create in a field influenced by vested interests were central to the research and were examined based on a close and detailed analysis of the interactions between official and unofficial responses to the SDGs. The official responses included the SDGs themselves, and unofficial responses came from a regional civil society mechanism that self-organized, starting in 2013 after Rio+20 to

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engage specifically with the emerging Agenda 2030. To this end, the research used the following research questions:

1. How do the SDGs reproduce or change the mainstream development/sustainable development narrative?
2. How do civil society actors engage with the SDGs at the regional level?
3. How do the SDGs shape regional engagement space between civil society and other actors?
4. How do regional civil society engagement mechanisms negotiate and promote their spaces and positions in the official and non-official tracks?

To examine the first two questions, the research analyzed the sustainable development discourse as represented in the official global track from Rio+20 through the formulation of the SDGs globally and their 'uptake' at the regional level in Asia-Pacific at the UN regional commission.

The research examined the latter two questions by tracing the rationalization and negotiation approach of a regional civil society engagement platform called the Asia-Pacific Regional CSO Engagement Mechanism (AP-RCEM) that emerged after Rio+20 and which has focused on facilitating grassroot engagement with the official SDGs processes in the region.

It is interesting to compare the emphases of CSOs with the official SDGs track to trace how and whether voices, that are often more radical than those heard from governmental actors, can attain space and influence into the official process. While the AP-RCEM is an engagement platform to facilitate access of other voices

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in official processes, it has a clear political message that focuses on Development Justice (Ibon International, 2013) and on structural barriers to sustainable development. AP-RCEM therefore a relevant case to study more closely the aspects of power and resistance that engaged with the SDGs.

Beyond its policy and regional relevance, the research contributes to the academic and policy literature on governance and governing. It does so first by identifying the predominant elements of governing advocated as necessary for a 'transformative' change, further building on the work on governance for sustainable development of Kanie & Biermann (2017), and of Death & Gabay, (2015a); Fletcher, (2010); and Gore, (2015). By looking specifically at the case of the CSO engagement platform, the research also contributes to the growing literature on governmentality that has identified the need for research to support 'liberation' types of initiatives by adding to the understanding of the types of governing that facilitate resistance and create space for promotion of different approaches to sustainable development (Fletcher, 2017). And since the SDGs are an ongoing project, there is limited knowledge of the processes of subject creation and empowerment that result from the SDGs' inclusive process and the creation of subjects and 'ownership' on these processes and how that is an indirect form of governing towards the overarching ends of the SDGs' project, which, in the narrow sense, is meeting the goals. There is also a need to take a critical stance to the lack of implementation of the SDGs overall, to point out what is going wrong, or where there is 'talk instead of walk'. The research also contributes to this aspect.

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1.4. Thesis Structure and Organization

Following this introductory chapter, Chapter 2 provides a review of relevant literature that highlights different approaches to governing sustainable development. This chapter also discusses theories and existing debates surrounding Foucault's notion of 'governmentality' to identify a theoretical stance of the research. The chapter then discusses the historical perspective of development, colonialism, and the emergence of neoliberalism to position the research in the continuum of the existing debates on development and sustainable development. Finally, the chapter provides key background information on the researched CSO group–the APRCEM.

Chapter 3 provides a justification and description of the chosen methodological approach and methods of data collection for the thesis which is a combination of several methods comprising of text analysis, elements of event ethnography and supporting interviews, participant observation and informant conversations. This chapter also discusses limitations, reflexivity, and ethics and research risks and how the research approached them.

Chapter 4 presents the data collected during the research. It analyses key texts related to the SDGs, both before and after the SDGs emerged to extract the types of problems that were stated, and the types of governing that had been promoted as solutions to these problems. It then undertakes a similar analysis of key statements made by the AP-RCEM over the period between 2014-2018. It also examines how the CSOs understand key problems and solutions to sustainability challenges and shows how they openly oppose and resist neoliberal trends but

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also make use of some of its rationalities and techniques of governance when deemed useful to their ends. Chapter 4 identifies different rationalities and forms of governing, however does not discuss in depth the theoretical implications of these findings –these are covered more in depth in Chapter 5.

Chapter 5 discusses the findings from the data collection and how they relate back to Foucauldian notions of governmentality and power. Its discussions are based on the findings from Chapter 4, but it also uses additional extensive quotes from interviews, as these often work to illustrate the findings and related discussions. The dissertation was structured in this way, since interview quotes work well to illustrate the discussions in Chapter 5.

Chapter 6 then presents a summary of findings in relation to the research questions. It also presents the main contributions of the research and proposes potential future directions.

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Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

This chapter opens with a short review of some different interpretations of sustainable development and then presents a broad overview of key rationalities that have influenced the predominant interpretations of sustainable development, and which the SDGs reflect. It then sketches out the roots of liberal and advanced (neo)liberal political thought and policy to show how some predominant interpretations of sustainable development (and the SDGs' governance) are based on advanced liberal and neoliberal rationalities. The chapter then reviews development, its global effects and inherent conflicts from a historical perspective to theorize that they resulted in the global SDGs that both represent the broader sustainable development tradition but also represent a breaking point with potential for radical interventions such as those advanced by the AP-CRCEM. The chapter concludes with an elaboration of Foucault's governmentality and its use for analyzing basic rationalities of governing of sustainable development and the SDGs.

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2.2. SD as a Reflexive Boundary Object

Research question 1 is broadly examining the link between past conceptions of development and sustainable development on the one hand, and then SDGs on the other. This is necessary to establish that the concept is contestable and therefore has allowed actors to use it to prioritize different actions under its broad header, and that different actors and processes have ended up

(consciously or unconsciously) prioritizing economic, social or environmental aspects separately, in often contradictory ways.

The possibility to accommodate widely different worldviews under one umbrella makes SD into a 'boundary object' (Leigh Star, 2010; Star & Griesemer, 1989). It allows different groups to collaborate without pre-existing consensus and allows for interpretive flexibility. Much in line with the notion of a 'boundary object', recent scholarship argues for recognizing a reflexive approach to SD stating its boundary qualities (Scoones, 2016). Following that perspective, others also argue that prioritization between different environmental, social and economic measures requires a careful consideration of actors' different rationalities and worldviews (Van Opstal & Hugé, 2013), before potential governance solutions can be proposed (Meuleman & Niestroy, 2015). Related to the reflexive approach, social constructivists have argued that the concept of SD is highly subjective and lends itself to numerous interpretations with different social, economic, environmental, or even cultural emphasis (Shoreman-Ouimet & Kopnina, 2016; Wironen, 2007). Others again (Kemp & Martens 2007) argue that SD is better approached as a concept of practice and experimentation rather than as a theory. Considering the variety of ways in which it can be interpreted the necessity to take a reflexive approach to SD implies that the interpretation of SD is contested and multiple schools of thought and practice exist, even if one or the other dominates.

Recognizing the interpretive quality of SD then allows for different solutions to sustainability to be introduced and promoted as legitimate. Specifically, goals

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and solutions in the SDGs (for example in SDG 8 on economic growth and SDG 12 on sustainable consumption and production) are mutually conflicting and create contestations between actors who then argue using distinct and mixed rationalities and techniques of governing to achieve their goals. Thus, the reflexive turn in sustainability science that is a response to the 'boundary' qualities of sustainable development widens the scope of different agendas that can claim the concept and promote solutions to the sustainability problem, which opens the possibility to hijack or 'green-wash' the concept for multiple purposes (Martin, 2014).

This reflexive and constructivist elasticity of the SD concept (and the SDGs) then also allows more radical interpretations to enter and contest in the field (Death & Gabay, 2015). This research used a governmentality lens of analysis to identify the different agendas competing in the SDGs. The research was based on a post-structuralist approach to distance the gaze of the observer (researcher) to better recognize the influence of different structures, discourses and their underlying narratives onto actors and institutions examined in this study. This approach was suitable because it focused on power relationships identified through different rationalities, subjectivities and forms of governing. It was thus possible to examine the inputs and activities of different actors' 'rationalities' and 'techniques' of governing to solve whichever problem of unsustainability they had highlighted.

Post structuralists (Dean, 2017; Fletcher, 2010; Lemke, 2002) have argued that different actors and institutions advance (or oppose) distinct rationalities,

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revealed in the forms of governing, which different agents advocate depending on their worldviews. The governmentalities that selected to illustrate the contestation between actors and institutions engaging with the SDGs will be discussed in more detail in section 2.7 below; here it is enough to establish that they fall into several distinct but overlapping categories of 'sovereign'; 'disciplinary', 'liberal' and/or 'neoliberal', and 'liberation' types (Fletcher 2010, 2017). These rationalities are subsequently discussed in reference to the research questions. To do so, we can turn to some predominant ways of governing sustainability, which are present in the literature and in policy initiatives of sustainable development and the SDGs.

2.3. Liberalism and SD

Although other studies in their own right claim that SD is the answer to the challenges of unsustainability, this research argues that SD, and the SDGs by extension, continue the liberal lineage of sustainable development (Bernstein, 2001). The goals are based on UN agreements and their implementation hinges on a degree of international trust and cooperation that has been the base for international agreements on sustainable development such as from the Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment in 1972, through the Rio conferences, the climate negotiations, the SDGs and other international initiatives.

The liberal system that is the base for sustainable development's international conceptions prefers to treat the problem of unsustainability as a technical rather

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than a deeply political problem perhaps because it seems easier to unite on a purely technical rather than a political mission. This predominant epistemic approach to sustainable development then often focuses on the 'right institutional set-up', or the right technology to facilitate the necessary integrated approaches to sustainable development, such as the main themes of the Rio+20 conference illustrate. It is also closely linked to a predominantly European approach of 'ecological modernization' (Hajer, 1995) where as long as there is enough modernization of production apparatus, technological prowess and economic growth, the problems of unsustainability can be dealt with as illustrated following the well-known Kuznets's Curve (Yandle, Vijayaraghavan, & Bhattarai, 2002).

In the context of the UN, which gave birth to the SDGs, some scientists omit the political dimension of sustainable development by turning it into an exercise that instead focuses on the right institutional set-ups to further cooperation and integration of the '3 dimensions' (Le Blanc, 2015; 2016). Other examples include the institutionalist approach promoted by the Global Environmental Governance (GEG) epistemic community (Biermann et al., 2010; Boas et al., 2016), alongside other institutional arrangements that are supposed to improve environmental governance (Ivanova, 2007; Jordan & Lenschow, 2010; Le Blanc, 2015). Its prominence in the global policy arena can be seen also in the promotion of national sustainable development strategies in the wake of the World Summit on Sustainable Development; in the Rio+20's focus on the 'Institutional Framework for Sustainable Development', and others. Many of these interventions assume

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that institutions can do the job of helping resolve conflicting priorities inherent in the concept of sustainable development.

While undoubtedly useful in countries with a relatively good governance record, the institutionalist approach to solve problems of unsustainability has been criticized for failing to address power dimensions that are inherent and which compete between advocates of different development priorities, and which can threaten to unravel well-intended approaches to sustainable development (Banks & Hulme, 2014; Stojanović, Ateljević, & Stević, 2016). Moreover, the predominant ecological modernization approach to operationalizing SD by focusing on technology, bridging capacity gaps and reform of institutional frameworks has received significant attention in UN outcome documents. But this is not the only approach to governance for sustainable development, as more critical voices have pointed out that is it a shortcoming to depoliticize the problem of sustainable development and turn it into a less controversial and mostly technical problem that can be overcome as long as the 'right' capacities are present, often as a result of north-south development aid (Banerjee, 2003). This perspective argues that the institutionalist approaches to management of the commons have been preferred in the sustainable development arena, since it is easy to agree on issues when their political and power dimensions are omitted.

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In view of the overall disappointments with the lack of performance of the institutional frameworks advocated by the GEG and other likeminded epistemic communities (Park et al., 2008), and those advocating for 'good governance' to promote economic growth as a part of sustainable development (Fine,

Lapavitsas, & Pincus, 2006; M. Grindle, 2010), others criticize this approach stating that SD combines different aspects of development and therefore by definition is loaded with political controversies, which cannot be solved by technical and 'one-size fits all' approaches only (Hedlund-de Witt, 2014; Stojanović et al., 2016), that may merely create rules that favor those which already have desired institutions in place, thus exacerbating the unequal relationship between developing and advanced countries or between powerful and less powerful actors in the development arena.

Thus, the problem of sustainable development from such epistemes is often one of sectoral approaches to planning and implementation. Solutions then include better coordination and apex bodies mandated to promote integration (M. S. Grindle, 2004). More recently market-based 'green governmentalities' have been promoted (Bäckstrand & Lövbrand, 2006), together with other methods of incentivizing compliance as approaches to govern for sustainable development. Such techniques of governing are based on a mixture of rationalities and techniques that are both enabled by the liberal global economy but also promote the role of the private sector over command-and-control forms of government. The influence of neoliberal policy strategies in the sustainable development arena is palpable and includes rationalities that emphasize risk (minimization), competition, self-governance, and promotes rationalities of the market at large. The next section summarizes those in more detail and also discuss some critique of the neoliberalisation of sustainable development and its techniques of governing.

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2.4. Neoliberalism and SD

I have argued that the SDGs are based not only on the liberalism and enlightenment promoted by the UN but also contain neoliberal rationalities, particularly by 'virtue' of their non-binding nature, their goal structure to encourage pursuit and competition, and in the governance techniques that this structure encourages.

Neoliberalism can be simultaneously understood as a policy strategy, ideology and form of government (Larner, 2000). Some argue that it emerged as an identifiable but heterogeneous militant movement seeking to influence and appropriate the powers of national and international organizations, including states (Dean, 2014). Since it was introduced by Friedrich von Hayek, Milton Friedman and other economists under the Mont Pelerin Society and later at the University of Chicago (Harvey, 2007), the neoliberal approach to governing has become an increasingly mainstream rationality of governing not only economic policy but also development and sustainable development policy, including the SDGs.

There are several examples that reveal the underlying neoliberal rationality. For one, the SDGs have adopted the goal, target and indicator structure of the MDGs, which are really neoliberal techniques of governance (Death & Gabay, 2015), that encourage compliance through the 'performance awareness' made available through its indicators and targets. Goal setting differs from a binding law or an

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agreement, where the goal and its surrounding mechanics encourage a competition towards its attainment rather than compliance with a sovereign law, although at national level a sovereign of disciplinary response to this may be enacted and is therefore also promoted as part-and-parcel of the SDGs (see Chapter 4 for examples).

Neoliberal rationality is recognizable through the focus on competition, marketization and *transactionism* of inter-human and inter-state relationships (Michel Foucault, 2008; Lorenzini, 2018). It is also identified through its reliance on quantification, best practices, technology promotion as rationalities that appeal to the 'self governing' individual that however freely 'opts in' based on a sentiment of ownership of an idea or a principle such as those embedded in the SDGs. Neoliberal rationalities have their roots in Enlightenment and Modernity and permeate even highly normative organizations like the UN as well as potentially radical alternatives proposed by outlier segments of the SDG agents, mostly found in the left of the political spectrum such as the case study of the civil society platform which is analyzed in Chapters 4 and 5.

Other examples of this trend also permeate the more general promotion of sustainable development. For example, the UN, OECD and many other large players in the fields of development have often advocated efforts to promote eco-efficiency on the potential to increase productivity to facilitate more, or 'sustainable', growth. So it remains that sustainable development should happen for the sake of making growth more sustainable and not the other way round, i.e. that economic activity should happen on the premises (and limits) of the

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environment (Wanner, 2015). This reveals the underlying rationalities also in the sustainable development discourse in present times that influence which techniques of governing are promoted to implement the SDGs.

Other neoliberal techniques of governing include the concepts of green growth and green economy, which were based on neoliberal market-governmentalities as interventions from OECD and the UN that came in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis (Stegemann & Ossewaarde, 2018), as well as the UNEP initiative to promote valuation of ecosystem services as an attempt to include it in the 'official' economy (TEEB, 2010; Wanner, 2015). More recently, the techniques of 'blended finance', have also been promoted to encourage countries to use sparse available public sector funds to create avenues for greater business investments that are supposed to have a greater positive impact generating action around sustainable development (Asian Development Bank, 2018; M. Martin & Walker, 2015).

It is not strange that sustainable development as a policy concept in its attempt at becoming mainstream has embraced neoliberal rationalities, the problem however becomes serious when it is co-opted and ends up promoting neoliberal rationalities rather than looking for transitions away from destructive practices often caused by rampant neoliberalism. The roots of neoliberalism's influence on sustainable development can be recognised in its founding document *Our Common Future* (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987). It states that nature should be protected, not for its own sake, but to allow for its continuous exploitation for the sake of economic growth (Geus, 2001). While the

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architects of the concept may have wanted something more radical, this view ultimately came to bear as a dominant interpretation of sustainable development (Sachs, 1999), to create compromise that could cater to the broadest of interests from developed and developing countries alike (Bernstein, 2001). In a related context, others point out that SD itself, even if were indeed a reaction to the negative effects of modern economic growth, remains very much a 'product' of the liberal world in its promotion of liberal and neoliberal rationalities and techniques of government (Dean, 2014; Lemke, 2002), some of which seem to exacerbate problems of unsustainability rather than solving them. This then turns sustainable development into an indirect advocate for those behaviors which it was intended to counteract and it functions to cloak unsustainable behavior in the name of sustainable development (Wanner, 2015) and maintain hegemonic relationships that exacerbate inequality (Stegemann & Ossewaarde, 2018). In connection to this, there are also authors who argue that the emergence of sustainable development itself in the last decades of the 20th century is a reaction to the compounding negative social and environmental effects of unsustainable economic growth (Du Pisani, 2006). Ironically then the emergence of sustainable development as advanced liberal policy strategy to alleviate the problems caused by neoliberalism was itself a product of the advanced liberal and neoliberal discourse. What is exactly the allure of neoliberalism and why has it become such a dominant force in shaping thoughts around sustainable development today? The next section provides a brief historical context.

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2.5. A Historical Perspective of Development and SD

The research in this thesis argues that neoliberal rationalities permeate even highly normative concepts and frameworks like the SDGs, but how did that come about? Understanding this requires considering how ontologies and epistemologies of the past have shaped priorities of development, sustainable development, and ultimately influenced the types of governing that the SDGs promote.

In the tradition of Western thought, we can go as far back as the advent of Christianity, which introduced the linear conception of time leading to progress at the level of societies (Barry, 2007). This reflected a break with the perception of cyclical notions of time as taught by nature, and some argue that this break remains the predominant ontological interpretation of reality in most of the western world (Shoreman-Ouimet & Kopnina, 2016). European Enlightenment and modernity also plays a role, since important works here introduced positivism and development of the natural sciences as realms of knowledge, separated from religion (Kant, 1784; Rousseau, 2002). The modern thought advanced by these and other thinkers lay the base for liberal thought and action recognizable in normative organizations like the UN, its universal declarations, and also the universal and globally applicable SDGs.

At the same time, European Colonization was underway. It was justified by the duality created by the advance of natural sciences that began to atomize, objectify, and dissect nature (Merchant, 2006), which then also came to be reflected in the colonial view of nature (as resources) as a bounty to be 'tamed'

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(Shoreman-Ouimet & Kopnina, 2016). When colonization gave way to granted or forced independence, this stewardship of 'advanced' over 'primitive' nations became recontextualized to fit the larger discourse of decolonization and 'trusteeship' of developed over less developed countries, alongside the geopolitical rationalities and techniques of containment of the Cold War. In the 20th century development became focused on a necessary market expansion from the developed world to avoid economic recession in developed countries who needed a greater market for their production (Ziai, 2016), and then cheaper labor for their manufacturing sectors to stay competitive. Development then not only benefitted the western economies through increasing inflows of natural resources, but it also created an effective bulwark against communist expansion. Apart from a few exceptions criticizing the beginning of globalization as creating a dependency of developing countries to developed ones (Baran, 1957), this strategy was quite successful in that it created the meta-narrative of economic growth challenged by only a few alternatives in a few countries.

During that time Polanyi (1957) made a strong critique of the industrial and increasingly market-based and 'neoliberal' society. In this view equality of development was impossible, and Polanyi criticized mainstream development for creating and maintaining hegemony based on reinforcement of structural inequalities, much in line with what Gramsci and others had argued much earlier (Gramsci, 1999). Nevertheless, and despite the growing critique that gradually became clear (Carson, 1962; Meadows et al., 1972; Schumacher, 1973), development mostly remained an enterprise which northern experts and technocrats undertook in developing 'recipient' countries (Van Opstal & Hugé,

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2013). This took the form of educating developing countries and restructuring their economies to allow them to enter the free global market (Ziai, 2016). This approach to development persisted into the MDG era, as the MDGs were based on the duality between donors and recipients (although not using the terminology of primitive societies but the label 'developing'). The MDGs advanced neoliberal techniques of governing, in particular the goal structure, the reliance on technical and expert knowledge based on positivist natural science and others belonging to a late-modern, neoliberal, worldview (Lühr & Schulz, 1997; Van Opstal & Hugé, 2013).

The MDGs expressed the modern and neoliberal rationality of the 'power of numbers' (Fukuda-Parr & Yamin, 2013), effectively reducing development to countable indicators in the attempt to create an international race among countries to achieve the goals. While the MDGs were effective in drawing global attention to the issues and areas they represented, they were unfair in their lack of addressing structural root-causes of inequality (Saith & Ashwani, 2006), human rights, (Fukuda-Parr & Hulme, 2011) and gender (Antrobus, 2006), and for setting targets that did not sufficiently take into account the different national contexts and development challenges that countries faced (Fehling, Nelson, & Venkatapuram, 2013). The goals were also criticized for oversimplifying development, failing to present a fair picture of progress across different regions, such as Africa (Easterly, 2009), presenting development as a depoliticized and technocratic process (Scoones, 2016; Ziai, 2009), and providing only one goal on the environment and a goal on governance which was the least successful of all.

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Sustainable development and the SDGs build on this legacy which was influenced at base by modernity, and those that entered the development discourse during post WW2 globalization and the extension of the liberal world order uniting the need for economic growth with that of social equity and environmental conservation (Du Pisani, 2006), all the while retaining the duality and hierarchy that has characterized modern societies since Enlightenment, most recently evident in the new term 'Anthropocene' signifying the focus on the overriding human agency as external to the environment.

2.6. SD and the SDGs

The SDGs came about as the latest iteration of the SD discourse and are increasingly reflecting neoliberal policy priorities that entered the development discourse over the later decades of the 20th century. The SDG framework contains neoliberal elements at (at least) two levels -one through the reflection of neoliberal rationalities and techniques of governing. But also at a much more fundamental level the inclusiveness and universality that are grounding principles of the goals are creating ownership of the agenda broadly among stakeholders widely extended beyond the government. The shift in emphasis of governing from institutionalist, sovereign types of power towards neoliberal 'freedoms' from governmental interference, and the distinctly Foucauldian notion of power as productive and creating of knowledge -with the overall purpose to encourage (rather than force) concerted action in a desired direction. Thus, I would argue that the SDGs at least in those characteristics represent a mature form of neoliberal governance.

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Scholars have been warning that these neoliberal rationalities and techniques of governing can hijack the agenda in their own favor. The avenues to enter and influence negotiations around sustainability are contingent on knowledge and expertise. Such knowledge and expertise is never apolitical but has been criticized for reproducing dominant discourses rather than allowing for alternatives to gain traction (Banerjee, 2003; Lund, Sungusia, Mabele, & Scheba, 2017; Svarstad, Benjaminsen, & Overå, 2018). Specifically for the SDGs, certain neoliberal techniques of governing, particularly those promoting inclusiveness, ownership and self-organization, have allowed space for new actors to enter the debate and challenge the dominant narrative of sustainable development (Death & Gabay, 2015; Ziai, 2016), creating the possibility for a more radical reinvention of the space. This exact potential for new 'liberation' governmentalities (Fletcher, 2017) to enter the negotiations around the SDGs was examined in this research by focusing on the activities of the AP-RCEM.

The use of advanced liberal techniques of governing was a defining aspect of the SDGs' creation, applied to create a system of checks and balances. The SDG process emphasized access, openness and inclusiveness (Corson, Brady, Zuber, Lord, & Kim, 2015; Weitz, Persson, Nilsson, & Tenggren, 2015). The Open Working Group (OWG) on the SDGs that convened between 2013 and 2014 in New York exemplifies this since it was a government-sanctioned process very different from exclusive expert panels of the past (such as for the MDGs) that the UN Secretary General would appoint. The OWG also encouraged CSOs and NGOs to access and influence the regular OWG meetings and negotiations in New York between 2013 and 2014 (ActionAid, 2015; Beyond 2015, 2015; Weitz et al.,

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2015). The comprehensiveness of this process illustrated not only the significant interest from multiple corners of society, but is also a sign that development was increasingly becoming everybody's business instead of being controlled entirely by the 'north' and received by the 'south' (Death & Gabay, 2015; Hajer et al., 2015). The analyses in chapters 4 and 5 show in more detail how this was constituted and how it created a precedence to allow regional CSO groupings to influence subsequent SDG negotiations in Asia-Pacific.

The inclusive approach of the OWG on the SDGs processes signaled a change in sustainable development governmentality, hinting that self-determination and responsibility to act had become dispersed among an increasing number of actors. By opening the process not only to governments from all corners of the world but also to other stakeholders, the SDGs came to govern through creation of ownership of the process and its outcomes among those that had been involved. Those involved in the SDGs process became subjects to the SDGs but also shaped the agenda.

While promoting neoliberal approaches to development and also creating spaces for new more critical voices to enter the negotiations, the SDGs also rekindled the importance of sovereign governments to take necessary action towards sustainable development. This is evident in the emphasis on national self-determination, traditional knowledge and science, CSO participation, openness and inclusiveness that are found throughout the goals, targets and their accompanying texts (United Nations General Assembly, 2015a). Chapters 4 and 5 provide detail on this discussion.

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The above section has summarized how the SDGs are a continuation of the sustainable development project, but that they also retain elements of the 'conventional development' discourse as found in the MDGs. This 'merging' of discourses or narratives provides a potential for the sustainable development project to challenge neoliberal ways of governing and potentially take the dominant discourse on development in a new direction. On the other hand, it also is a risk for sustainable development, as it becomes more mainstream and influential, it may also become less 'radical' and be coerced by dominant rationalities, employing dominant market-oriented types of government that derive from neoliberal policy strategies but without retaining the liberatory rationalities necessary for transformative change. The next section discusses in greater detail the governmentality approach to analysis, which this research employed to identify points of contestation and their discursive adherence in key texts from the SDG arena both globally and in the Asia-Pacific region.

2.7. Analytical Framework

While governance dimensions of the SDGs can be (and have been) analyzed using various approaches including GEG, Marxist or neo-Marxist, Gramscian or critical theory, the negotiations around influence and priorities in the SDGs' negotiations can be suitably analyzed with a post structural approach. Post structuralism allows for a distancing of the analytical gaze as far as possible from any epistemic approaches that are within a value structure, and it becomes possible to provide an accurate and critical picture of the how the SDGs govern and are governed by different actors, which makes it possible to recognize the structures that influence the transformative potential of the SDGs. To do this, this research used

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a post structural Foucauldian discourse analysis of the different governmentalities that meet and clash in the SDGs processes to probe the 'radical potential' of the SDGs.

The types and mechanisms of governing for sustainable development that different actors and institutions advocate can depend on their adherence to certain worldviews and rationalities. Because SD and the SDGs are so inclusive and all-encompassing, a mix of different rationalities and approaches to governing meet under the SDGs 'umbrella', some of which are symbiotic, and others that clash and dominate. A framework to analyze this fine-grained meeting of different approaches to governing enables us to analyze the politics and contestations inherent in the SDGs, which are initially obscured by the 'universality' and inclusiveness' that appear on the surface of the debate. By identifying dominant and contested rationalities and techniques of governing, or 'governmentalities' the research illustrated current state of the sustainable development discourse and how different actors engaged and influenced that discourse at the regional 'stage', in Asia and the Pacific.

Foucault first proposed the term 'governmentality' during a series of lectures in College de France in 1977-79 as a guideline for analysis of the workings of the modern state (Lemke, 2002). Notes from these lectures were since published as *Security, Territory, Population* (Michel Foucault, 2009), and as a chapter in *Power and Knowledge* (Michel Foucault, 2003). The concept describes the 'mentalities' of rule (Mckee, 2009; Rose & Miller, 2008), often exercised as an indirect form of governing to shape, guide or affect the conduct of some person or persons

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(Gordon, 1991). It means that 'governmentality' is a specific way of viewing the concept of governing by the state historically, but it also covers specific ways of governing the self and others, ways that are often indirect and are reflected in the ways institutions and organizations are set up (Huxley, 2008).

Before 2006 'governmentality' had a rather limited audience because of Foucault's initial lectures' lack of translation into the English language, but since then the approach gained traction in several fields. It has often been used to examine different forms of governing not exclusive to the management and administration exercised by the state and has been labeled the 'conduct of conduct' (Miller & Rose, 2008), to emphasize the often indirect ways of governing that are distinct from sovereign and disciplinary power. Analytically, Foucauldian notions of power are not judged to be malevolent or benevolent in the same way as Marxists would approach it, but can empower and create new avenues of influence and decision making (Lemke, 2002) among groups and individuals; in that sense the post structural approach to power is productive, rather than just restricting (Daldal, 2014). This notion of power is closely tied to knowledge (Michel Foucault, 1980), and the potential for new knowledges to gain traction. That angle on power is specifically relevant for the case study of the Asia-Pacific CSOs, which is described in Chapter 4.

Neoliberalism, which Foucault argued was an approach to organizing social relations based on market-oriented rationalities to provide people with opportunities to exercise their freedom imposing no specific way of life upon them (Lorenzini, 2018), is represented with various market-oriented

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rationalities and governing techniques in the SDGs and is not to be understood only in a Marxist or Material sense. Rather, we should understand it like Foucault interpreted it, as the perceived freedom to define and act which individuals experience under neoliberal governmentality that then creates subjects that are 'imminently governable' (Michel Foucault, 2008, p. 270) in a different and more indirect way than sovereign or disciplinary power as often exercised by states.

Foucault initially distinguished between three main types of power being 'disciplinary', 'sovereign', and 'liberal'. Disciplinary power involves schooling, manufacturing, armies, prisons and other institutions that instill discipline (rules or norms) into a population. Judiciary and executive branches of government execute sovereign power, which involves parliaments, constitutions and laws. Liberal power, historically more recent, is much more indirect and describes the emergence of a form of governing that seeks the balance between 'governing too much and too little' (Dean, 2010).

Since Foucault introduced this lens of analysis of government, scholars have adopted the governmentality approach to analyze not only the conduct of states, but also the ways in which other, non-state entities such as the private sector, international organizations, or civil society govern and are governed through distinct rationalities and techniques of power. The liberal governmentality, reflected in the major discourse that has dominated most of the world since the end of WW2, is relevant for the SDGs, because the UN has promoted liberal types of government as alternative to the failure of achieving compliance with binding

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commitments at the international level. It can be seen as a kind of self-governing, but within defined, predictable and controllable possibilities.

A growing body of literature has engaged with liberal governmentality to discuss for example state formation (Jessop, 2006), and rule in advanced liberal societies (Dean, 2010; Rose & Miller, 2008). Others have identified the governmentalities at play in environmental governance (Agrawal, 2005; Jepson et al., 2012; Rutherford, 2007), in fields of education (Amos, 2010), and climate change (Okereke, 2007; Okereke & Bulkeley, 2015). Others still have analyzed and juxtaposed different approaches to govern climate change and other environment and development issues (Bäckstrand & Lövbrand, 2006; Oels, 2005).

While each of these authors have a slightly different take on governmentality, a similarity among them is that they identify different rationalities and techniques of governing to examine how larger discourses and narratives create subjectivities among those who react to this exertion of power. Rationalities refer to a specific form of reasoning, purpose or aim, which could be rational, market-oriented, spiritual or otherwise (Dean, 2010, p. 29). Techniques (or technologies) refer to particular modes of governing, and examples of such are indicators, particular modes of analysis to support arguments, consultations, competitions, voluntary reporting or others. Subjectivities refer to identities that emerge in the meeting of this power and can include experts, marginalized, protesters, and other types of identities.

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While the governmentality approach can be (and has been) used to examine compliance with different governmental priorities, most scholars interpret governmentality to necessarily involve neoliberal ways of governing. Some (Banerjee, 2003; Fischer, 2012; Mckee, 2009) thus argue that governmentality as a practice of governing is a 'technique to restrict and channel the freedom of action of individuals and [it] seeks to construct particular governable and self-disciplined subjects' (Fischer, 2012:6). Others, who also understand governmentality to be distinctly neoliberal, have criticized it for allowing the private sector to access the management of natural resources without creating necessary accountability frameworks (Adelman, 2015).

However, this research uses the governmentality approach not to indicate automatic adherence to any specific governmental rationality (or neoliberal project), but uses the analytical lens proposed by the governmentality framework to examine how forms of governing evolve and contest each other through the use of rationalities and techniques that could be classified according to different discourses within the SDGs and how these governmentalities in turn propose that the SDGs should be governed. One of these governmentalities certainly signifies dominance of the neoliberal discourse that, as previous sections in this chapter have discussed, remains an influence in sustainable development, even under the SDGs.

It does however not mean that governmentality as an analytical approach cannot be used to analyze and critically evaluate the forms of governing promoted in the context of the SDGs. On the contrary, the governmentality analytical framework

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is relevant not only for liberal types of governing, but is apt to analyze the politics of the SDGs more generally. Fletcher (2010, 2017), for example, has conducted more general policy analysis in environment and development fields. He discusses the multiple governmentalities that can be recognised in these fields and summarizes the three key tenets of Foucault's governmentality and proposes the 'liberation environmentality' (Fletcher, 2017), which concerns "egalitarian and non-hierarchical forms of natural resource management in which local people enjoy a genuinely participatory (if not self-mobilizing) role" (Fletcher, 2010, p. 178). The activities of the AP-RCEM case study exemplified such liberation environmentality, but acting in the space created by the SDGs in the advanced-liberal system.

Lemke (2002:8) exemplifies the relation of neoliberalism to sustainable development by pointing out its promotion of management and internalization of natural 'capital' to the economy. The SDGs for example are not a set of enforceable regulations but rather moldable norms that rely on a kind of 'voluntary regulatory system' (Dean, 2014, p. 11), which derives from the liberal and neoliberal dominant discourses that create momentum towards a desired aim through broad participation and inclusive processes in order to generate ownership and 'responsibilisation' (Gross & McGoey, 2015; Lemke, 2002).

The SDGs reflect neoliberal forms of governance since they are a product of the current world that is dominated by the neoliberal word view. Despite that, and to caution against denoting that such neoliberal traits are automatically a 'bad', it is important to recognize that the SDGs, even with those neoliberal traits, do not

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automatically constitute a lost cause. For one, because the SDGs contain goals that challenge the prevailing neoliberal paradigm for the necessary elements it has failed to address, such as environment, inequality and universality (even if only on paper). Second, the goal architecture, whilst an advanced liberal form of governing, allow for varied and opposing voices to enter and influence the discourse to a much larger extent than if the SDGs had been exclusively a governmental matter.

This finally brings us back to the rationalities and techniques from Fletcher's (2010, 2017) 'liberation environmentality', which has led other scholars of governmentality to assume a certain 'radical potential' with the SDGs (Death & Gabay, 2015). References to such other contesting types of rationalities within the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda can counterbalance increasing neo-liberalization of sustainable development by establishing checks and balances. Within the SDG framework these techniques exist as references to the importance of human rights, equality, inclusiveness, leaving no one behind, participation and social justice.

Especially relevant in the context of this research's contribution are Fletchers concluding comments (Fletcher, 2017, p. 4) that suggest the necessity of future studies on target actors that "…negotiate the specific subject positions promoted by different environmentalities […and that…] critical scholarship concerning environmental politics should […] seek to support projects of emancipation promoting direct democratic decision-making and egalitarian distribution of resources".

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I have undertaken the further research and analysis as identified and suggested by Fletcher and Death to see contestation, protest and convergence of different discourses under the SDGs. A useful analytics that is applied to the discourse analysis in Chapter 4 is based on work by other scholars (Bäckstrand & Lövbrand, 2006; Death & Gabay, 2015; Fletcher, 2017; Thomson, 2015). Table 1 shows 'prototypical' signifiers of governmentalities and constitutes the analytical framework used in the data gathering and analysis stages of this research. Not all of these signifiers were found in the data but enough was found to diagnose the different governmentalities in the 2030 Agenda as well as in the statements of the AP-RCEM.

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Table 1: Possible forms of governing in the SDGs

Characteristic governmentality elements	Prototypical forms of governing /power				
	Sovereign	**Liberal**	**Disciplinary**	**Neoliberal**	**Liberation**
Rationalities of governing (Aims, values, purpose and their articulation)	National sovereignty; Centralized; government-led Exclusive	Universality; integration; Inclusiveness International/Global Freedom; Dignity and equality 'Leave-no-one-behind'	Order and discipline Adhere to procedural rules,	Freedom to act Neoliberal economics (getting the price right) International and national Individualist, entrepreneurial, profit 'winners and losers'	Structural In/equality**,** Bottom-up Justice, Redistribution (CBDR) Non-negotiables, localism North-South gap
Techniques of governing (tools, approaches)	Top-down; Laws and regulations; punishment Laws and compliance Central planning Conservation	Cooperation International agreements Meetings and conferences Consensus decision making Reporting good practices Norm setting	Discipline; control; norms Rules, regulations, and standards, to an extent also morality Calculation Protocol Accreditation Indicators or benchmarks	Benchmarking; good practices Competition Coalitions of willing Marketization as org. principle Individual responsibility (empowerment) Decentralized; Self-organized, External incentives	Self organization Independence Participatory decision making Deliberative democracy Consensus decision making
Subjectivities of governing (emerging identities in group or individual)	Governor Official Delegate Government representative	International expert Civil servant UN staff	Sectoral expert Lecturer	Individual entrepreneur, Risk taker, competitor, business person; 'winners and losers'	'Me-too'; marginalized people; activist, people's movement; grassroots movement; constituency based representation;

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Table 1 is an interpretation of how other authors have applied governmentality in this field. The five categories in the table are 'sovereign', 'liberal', 'disciplinary', neoliberal', and 'liberation'. Some authors, especially early additions to the governmentality approach (Agrawal, 2005; Dean, 2010; Jessop, 2006; Lemke, 2002; Rose & Miller, 2008) most strongly developed disciplinary, sovereign, and liberal governmentalities. Other more recent additions to the field (Death & Gabay, 2015; Fletcher, 2010, 2017; Okereke & Bulkeley, 2015) further developed and contributed to governmentality beyond nation state, concerning categories that fall more into advanced liberal and liberation types of rationality.

I then argue that different governmentalities are identifiable and examinable by looking at their 'rationalities', 'techniques of governing', and 'subjectivities of governing'. Each of these clusters also has examples that signify a distinct governmentality or power, but in reality the boundary between them is permeable and they exist in a continuum. We should thus view them merely as forms or entry points for analysis. It would have been possible to add additional characteristic elements such as subjects of governing and objects of governing. However, subjects of governing is implied by the focus on emerging subjectivities, since subjectivities denote identification with a predominant idea or narrative, and objects of governing in the case of the SDGs was the content and focus of the SDG goals and targets. Different authors have applied the governmentality approach with various emphases and differing terminology, which leaves governmentality as analytical approach open for experimentation and emphasis depending on the field that is studied. In this case, the study placed a specific focus on 'liberation' and 'neoliberal' governmentalities. It served to

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examine and compare the governmentalities of the official SDGs process with AP-RCEM CSO platform's alternative interpretation. This allowed an identification of aspects of power and different forms of government within the SDGs and, more importantly, served to illustrate how fringe voices self-organized to enter and influence (and become influenced by) the official process, which catering to governments and private business interests had few (if any) radical and transformative elements. It thus showed the importance of allowing radical voices, often from CSOs, to enter and contest the field to ensure that the official field maintains its credibility and effectiveness as a forum for change.

2.8. The AP-RCEM

Embraced or shunned, CSOs have been active in sustainable development processes ever since the Stockholm Conference in 1972. Until Rio+20 globally all CSOs (that were not among the large and well-resourced international NGOs who usually have direct observer status at UN meetings) followed the Major Group (MG) system, which came out of the 1992 Rio Earth Summit, and by which each organization was classified into one of nine MGs, most of which represent constituencies. However, after Rio+20, in the Asia-Pacific region, a group of individuals joined forces to organize according to broader constituency and subregional groups, and based on advocating a radical feminist framework of Development Justice (Ibon International, 2013). Development Justice as per the platform's website was a "…transformative framework for development that aims to reduce inequalities of wealth, power, and resources between countries, between rich and poor, and between men and women and other social group. It places people – that is the majority poor and the marginalized – at the heart of

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development. It is a paradigm that recognizes the importance of sustaining the Earth's planetary boundaries over sustaining profits. Development justice requires past injustices to be remedied and new just, sustainable and democratic systems to be developed" (AP-RCEM, 2015). The group came to be known as the Asia-Pacific Regional CSO Engagement Mechanism (AP-RCEM).

Individuals from different regional civil society organizations got together during a CSO meeting in late 2012 in Kathmandu, Nepal and in mid-2013 in Phnom Penh. UNEP had organized these meetings as part of the space they usually allowed and supported to let CSOs get together and discuss among themselves. The CSOs present at the meetings evaluated and compared their respective experiences from the Rio+20 process. The group of CSOs then presented a conference room paper with their ideas during the Third Session of the Committee on Environment and Development of the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), in Bangkok, Thailand in October 2013 and issued a Conference Room Paper (later published as concept paper) to inform regional governments about their intentions (Asia-Pacific Regional CSO Engagement Mechanism, 2014b).

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ESCAP and the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) welcomed this proactive initiative and subsequently opened doors for the participation of the AP-RCEM in the Regional Consultation on Accountability for the Post-2015 Development Agenda; the ESCAP 70th Commission Session, and the Open Working Group consultations on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2014, and the relationship grew over the years to accommodate a broad and important role for AP-RCEM in facilitating CSO voices at the regional APFSD (AP-RCEM

Evaluation, 2019, Forthcoming). The researcher contributed as advisor to this evaluation.

Prior to this, most CSO engagement through UNEP and ESCAP in the region had most often depended on the UN using its usual consultants to organize and handpick a few CSOs whom they knew would say 'the right things' and had them talk among themselves with little or no connection to any official processes (Personal communication, Tokyo, 2019). This changed after Rio+20, where the momentum created by the inclusive process leading up to the SDGs lent itself to CSOs from grassroots to organize themselves rather than being coordinated from 'above' or invited based on personal or professional preference, as had been the case in the past.

The AP-RCEM was the first time civil society, by own initiative, proposed a change to the UN's participation structure since the MG system, which had existed in the same form since the 1992 Earth Summit. AP-RCEM gained traction because of good timing. It was conceived when the SDGs process was underway and when 'inclusiveness' and 'participation' were highlighted as crucial for sustainable development (United Nations, 2012). The CSOs took advantage of this momentum to argue for greater and better engagement (AP-RCEM, 2014) to "reach the broadest number of CSOs in the region and harness the voice of grassroots and peoples' movements to advance Development Justice (DJ) and sustainable development" (AP-RCEM, 2015), and thus, once the SDGs were there, they could present their own, self-organized, bottom-up mechanism for engagement. A new development agenda (post-2015 as it was called back then) and the promise of new SDGs would require stronger and more strategic

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engagement by CSOs. This was not the least to help the transformative intention of the SDGs, but also to ensure that any development agenda would not be watered down and driven in different unsustainable directions (Personal communication, Bangkok, 2016, Chiang Mai 2019).

Over the course of late 2013 to late 2014 key individuals within the UN's Regional Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the United Nations Environment (UNE) became supportive of the idea to renew CSO engagement and therefore provided some support the CSOs in the Asia-Pacific region (Personal communication, Tokyo and Chiang Mai 2019) (See Table 6 further below for information on financial support provided over time).

A hundred CSO representatives formally established the AP-RCEM in 2014 during an event in Bangkok. Together they defined constituencies, forms, and main functions of the AP-RCEM. It became a platform for people's movements and other social movements to challenge power and to promote principles of Development Justice and bring attention to official processes of the political aspects of unsustainable development, particularly systemic barriers to sustainable development (Asia-Pacific Regional CSO Engagement Mechanism, 2014c). Figure 7 below illustrates AP-RCEM's structure. The AP-RCEM "constituents" together formed the decision-making and task-sharing architecture among the group of 23 volunteers, which all were from different countries in the region. Each Constituency Group and Subregional Group had an elected focal point, who then together formed the Regional Coordination

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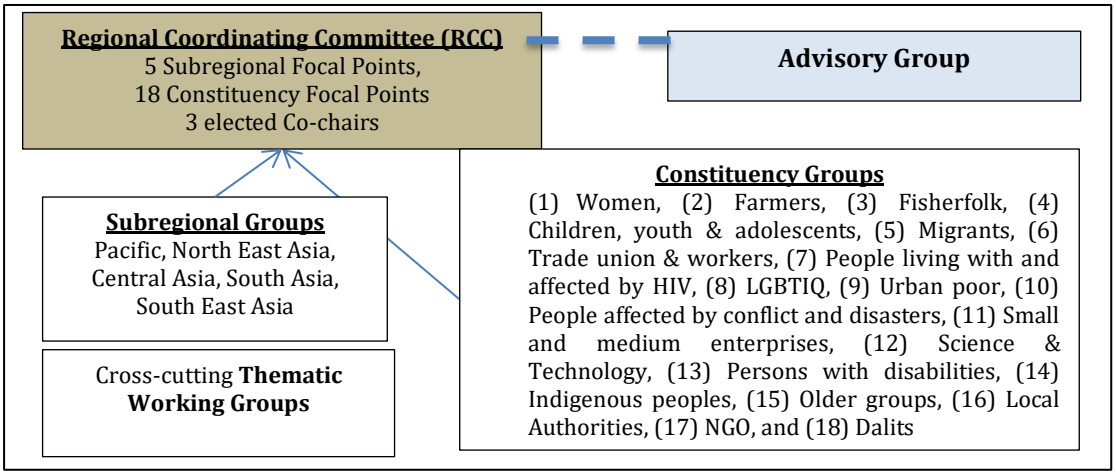
Committee (RCC), guided by an Advisory Group.[1] Co-chairs are elected through the pool of the RCC.

Figure 1: AP-RCEM Structure



Source: (Asia-Pacific Regional CSO Engagement Mechanism, 2014c)

The platform has facilitated CSO engagement primarily with ESCAP and UN Environment, but members of the mechanism also engage in other processes in the region. Through its broad membership, AP-RCEM has helped less-heard grassroot and marginalised constituencies such as Urban Poor, Indigenous Peoples, Lesbian, Gay Bisexual, Transgender, Intersexual and Queer (LGBTIQ), Fishers, Farmers and others to be heard at the regional and intergovernmental levels. At the conclusion of the research, the AP-RCEM had almost 700 organizations across the Asia-Pacific region that had joined the platform, and there were over 900 organizations on its listserv (AP-RCEM Evaluation, Forthcoming).

Table 2: AP-RCEM Constituents Over Time

Indicators	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
AP-RCEM constituents	75	427	489	582	694
AP-RCEM list serve		660	680	820	927

[1] The researcher himself has been in the Advisory Group since it was formed in 2014.

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Table 3: Composition of AP-RCEM's Membership

	AP-RCEM CSO Affiliates	
Type of Organization	**Number**	**Distribution**
Local organization	96	17.3%
Coalition	43	7.8%
National NGO	298	53.8%
Regional NGO	58	10.5%
International NGO	59	10.6%
Total	**554**	**100.0%**

Source: AP-RCEM constituencies database as of Sept. 6, 2018

Table 5, which was produced as part of the recent external evaluation (AP-RCEM Evaluation, Forthcoming) shows that indeed AP-RCEM's memberships was strongly represented by local, grassroots, or national organizations. More than 20% operate beyond the national level.

In the period surveyed, AP-RCEM was active regionally through ESCAP's APFSD, and at UNEP's annual summits and meetings. There were other meetings at the subregional level, where members of the platform were represented, and the AP-RCEM increasingly became active globally. The main forums at that level were UNEP's annual Environment Assembly in Nairobi and the HLPF in New York. For this research the main focus was the APFSD as the official regional track on the SDGs in the Asia-Pacific region, but also included data and info deriving from or concerning other events where relevant.

ESCAP has convened the annual APFSD since 2014. The forum is a platform for member States, stakeholders and United Nations entities to:

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- Identify regional trends and consolidate and share best practices and lessons learned;
- Assess regional progress and provide opportunities for peer learning related to the theme and goals that are reviewed every year at the HLPF;
- Support the presentation of Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) of 2030 Agenda implementation; and
- Undertake periodic review of progress of the Road Map for Implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific

(ESCAP, 2017).

AP-RCEM engaged this forum since it's beginning. It became ESCAP's go-to entity for organizing and coordinating civil society outreach and participation in the forum. The CSO mechanism also received funding support from the UN (mainly ESCAP and UN Environment) as well as from some bilaterals such as Commonwealth and the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) (AP-RCEM Evaluation, Forthcoming). The funding situation was as follows:

Table 4: Funding Support for AP-RCEM Over Time

Year and Amount (USD)	Source
2014: 25,000	ESCAP
2015: 46,000	UNEP, ESCAP, SIDA
2016: 33,000	ESCAP
2017: 15,000	ESCAP
2018: 35,000	ESCAP

In the early years of engagement the funding was disbursed to one of the chairing organizations of AP-RCEM. But since 2017 this practice had changed, which meant that even though funding did not decline per se, different and more

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stringent rules of financial disbursement of the UN limited the funding available to support CSO participants (Personal communication, Chiang Mai, 2019). Despite that, the numbers of CSOs who participated in ESCAP's APFSDs steadily increased over time, indicating a strong interest in the official process, for several reasons (discussed in Chapter 5).

Ahead of the APFSD, AP-RCEM organized the Asia-Pacific Peoples' Forum on Sustainable Development, which was usually a three-day gathering of CSOs and peoples' movements. The Peoples Forum was a space where CSOs could exchange experiences and have discussions and debates on key issues and themes relevant to the SDGs. The main objective of the Peoples' Forum was to create joint CSO positioning on key sustainable development issues, particularly on those themes that were taken up in the APFSD and at the global HLPF. A recent evaluation (AP-RCEM Evaluation, 2019, Forthcoming), found that the engagement at APFSD had increased over time, and that both participants and statements followed a positive trend, as seen in the table:

Table 5: AP-RCEM Engagement with APFSD

Indicators	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
CSO participants in People's Forum (prior to APFSD)	68	110	124	139	220
AP-RCEM-coordinated CSO participants in APFSD	60	80	70	90	110
AP-RCEM speakers/ panelists in formal sessions or roundtables	5 in formal sessions	3 in panels	2? opening speakers;	1 opening speaker; 5 in panels; 5 roundtables	1 opening speaker; 2 in panels; 5 roundtables
Other AP-RCEM interventions in formal sessions (from the floor)	3	No data	No data	14	14
Side events co-organized by AP-RCEM		2 events plus 1 booth	No data	2	1
Informal meetings with member states or other officials		No data	2	2	2
AP-RCEM submissions		No data	No data	9 joint CSO statements	No data

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				and 11 constituency statements	

Source: AP-RCEM Evaluation (Forthcoming)

This trend was contrary to a perceived dissatisfaction by AP-RCEM members on the 'shrinking' engagement space (AP-RCEM, 2016), which had been highlighted regularly by AP-RCEM's statements at the APFSDs and during meetings between AP-RCEM and the UN (Researcher's observation, 2016). Perhaps the spaces were really shrinking, or it was a way for the CSOs to exert their voice and influence, having it perceived as under constant threat, rather than improving, as the table above seems to indicate was happening at least at the regional level. Nonetheless, since its conception after Rio+20 and its official inception in 2014, the AP-RCEM gradually became a recognised regional constellation of grassroot and activist groups engaging largely on their own merits with the SDGs, whilst pushing the 'Development Justice' agenda to challenge the official track.

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Chapter 3: Research Methodology and Methods

3.1. Introduction and Research Design

This chapter presents the methodological approach taken in this research. To do so, it first presents an overview of the research design, and it then discusses the research methodology by comparing different approaches to discourse analysis and linking them with the governmentality analytical framework that Chapter 2 presented. After that, the chapter presents the research methods used in this research, which were primarily text analysis, interviews and conversations that were analyzed with annotation software and tools for data processing and analysis. The final section of this chapter outlines the steps that were undertaken in the four phases of the research detailing the data sources and data-types, and also considers some risks and limitations.

This study's inductive approach of allowing the focus to evolve as the field opened up is recognizable in the research design and in the four phases of successive fieldwork. This phased approach provided a gradually deepening analysis of highlighted governance practices in the SDGs. It also allowed an in-depth examination of how radical voices could carve out space and influence the official SDG processes in the Asia-Pacific region as one significant new element. Through sharing, validating, and debating the findings of this study with the subjects of the research, it provided a picture of key contestations around governing through the SDGs. Since my study used elements of participatory action research, an added benefit was that findings contributed to a related

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evaluation of the engagement, which took place between 2018 and 2019 to help strengthen the engagement of grassroots with official SDG processes in general.

The study combined descriptive and analytical research in four main phases that applied three different but linked methods. All four research phases used the same conceptual and analytical framework that Chapter 2 presented. Identifying the different rationalities, techniques, and subjectivities of governing that in the data enabled a fine-grained analysis of the governmentalities at play in the SDGs and offered clues as to the points of acceptance and resistance of different discourses and narratives in the SDGs.

As shown on Figure 1 that summarizes the four phases, phases 1 and 2 comprised text and document analysis of key SDG documents, and key documents produced by the CSO group in question in reaction to the SDGs, with a view to compare the positions of the CSOs with the language produced by the official process specifically related to how the SDGs should be governed and what were key issues 'left behind'. Phase 3 comprised participatory observation and analysis of notes collected over several years. This phase used observation during a range of international meetings and workshops, conference calls and discussions among experts, governments and CSOs. Drawing relevant data from observations across such variety of events presented an addition to the data and findings from phases 1 and 2 and worked to further identify dominant discourses and contestations around how the SDGs should be governed. Phase 4 involved semi-structured interviews and informal conversations with key informants from the CSO actor group in question to elaborate on and validate findings from phases 1-3. These information exchanges were focused on the

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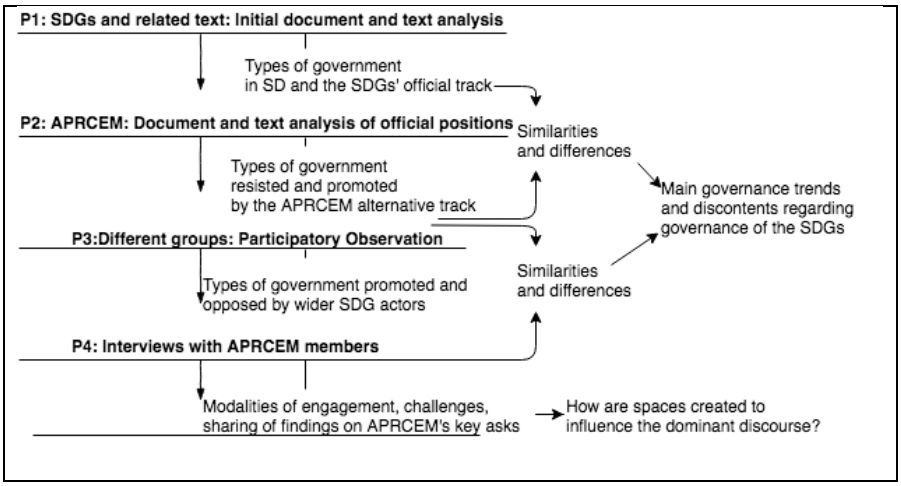
results of the analysis. Interview records, notes and observations are uploaded and available at:

https://drive.google.com/open?id=1kFJ6iYK13JuFiqxoOczIN5sIf0eEukSA

Figure 1 illustrates the four research and data collection phases as follows:

Figure 2: Research Design



3.2. Research Methodology

This section discusses different approaches to discourse analysis, which was the underlying methodology of all stages of the research. Texts or messages that focus on the SDGs actually 'negotiate' different positions. Sometimes these positions are explicit, but rationalities for or against different positions can also be implicit and emerge only when examining contexts, assumptions and values that are communicated, opposed or supported. Using a discourse analytical approach was therefore useful to systematically examine and analyze the different positionalities of actors, their cross-influences, and linkages to different rationalities and forms of power, governing and governmentality. There is a connection from discourse analysis as a methodology to Foucauldian concepts around discursive practices and governmentality. Discourses commonly refer to

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ensembles of "…ideas, concepts and categories through which meaning is given to social and physical phenomena, and which is produced and reproduced through an identifiable set of practices" (Hajer & Versteeg, 2005). The ideas in discourses are expressed through language, signs, images or other linguistic means. Discourse analysis focuses on messages, contradictions, or competing worldviews that may be inherent in these different expressions of language (Fairclough, 1989).

On the one hand, it is possible to distinguish between discourses as being constitutive to the world, and on the other hand - as being constituted by the world (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 20) signifying an ontological difference in approach. Laclau and Mouffe's (2001) social constructivist discourse theory falls at the 'discourse being constitutive' end of the spectrum. Works by Gramsci (1999) and Althusser (1971) fall at the opposite end where discourse is constituted by society. Between those two conceptual end-points we find Fairclough's (2012) Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which is a form of critical social analysis based on language and texts that often looks at different types of social oppression and hegemonic structures (Bazzul, 2014). Foucault's (1972, 1978) concept of discursive formations is related to Fairclough's CDA. Foucault used genealogical discourse analysis to analyze and describe power in society from a historical perspective. Both Fairclough's CDA and Foucault's discursive formations argue that discourses constitute and recreate worldviews, ideologies and institutions but that they are also formed by them at the same time; it means there is a two-way link between the outer world, how it is interpreted and

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owned by agents (people) as emerging subjectivities to the ideas inherent in the discourses, and how it then is reproduced.

By identifying different governmentalities at play in negotiations around the SDGs, the discourse analytical approach allows us see the interplay of different existing discourses. Specifically, the research undertook the comparison of the discourses promoted in the SDGs with how these had been accepted, interpreted or resisted by the main CSO actor group whose statements were analyzed in Phase 2 and whose members were interviewed in Phase 4 of the research.

Discourses create a common reference for social interaction on a given subject and they guide on what are supposedly right and wrong utterances about a given 'order of discourses' (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002), which refers to the larger ensemble of competing discourses under a header such as sustainable development, or the SDGs. As for the SDGs, the goals imply what is worth striving for, but because they do not prescribe one distinct path to get there, they also allow for a contestation of their ideal direction. Such contestation has happened in past discussions about targets and indicators, where economic, social or environmental priorities clashed (Schwegmann, 2016) while promoting different rationalities as 'as objective knowledge' (Mckee, 2009, p. 468). Here the interest of the analysis focuses more on how people 'own' or oppose certain worldviews rather than making a judgment on what is really truth or untruth.

The post-structuralist literature thus interprets discourses not only as a rhetoric disseminated by hegemonic economic and political groups, nor as the framework

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within which people represent their lived experience, but as a system of meaning that constitutes institutions, practices and identities in contradictory and disjunctive ways (Larner, 2000).

3.3. Discourses and Governmentality

The previous section mentioned Foucault as one among several thinkers to have shaped the field of discourse analysis. It is possible to connect discourse analysis as a methodological approach with Foucault's governmentality analytical lens, because the analysis of discourses can reveal competing notions of influence and power and how different individuals identify with memberships of different groups, or ideologies (Gee, 1992; in Taylor, 2013, p. 17), and how they achieve influence in the process, whilst themselves being influenced by it.

In fact, Foucault's large scale institutional analyses of power have often been coupled with discourse analytical approaches (Michel Foucault, 1972; Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002; Place & Vardeman-Winter, 2013). He argued that one discourse and knowledge regime would generally dominate any historical period. If we were to take this stance, we could argue that a neoliberal super narrative dominates the present but is contested by other trends, for example those that promote populism, nationalism and identity politics, such that are on the rise in some western countries, or those who try to 'liberate' from this narrative. All of these narratives influence the policy directions of the SDGs, and the types of power that are proposed to set the idea of the SDGs into motion.

Both the populist isolationist and the neoliberal sentiments are being challenged by many of the same ideas that lay the base for the SDGs. Often these take a

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'global commons' stance with regards to the need for environmental governance or better delivery of social-justice (Pogge, 2010). Looking at this challenge process offers a continuation to recent works that have taken a discourse analytical approach to sustainable development and its transformative potential (Death, 2010; Haque, 2000; Ziai, 2016). In contrast with Foucault's high-level approach, discourse analysis in this research accepts the existence of several competing discourses and associated knowledge regimes side-by-side and looks to dissect how the social world, including its subjects and objects, constitutes, and is constituted by them to make sense of the world.

It is important to note here that actors hardly ever represent one single discourse in any pure form. Often there is a mix of discourses readily identifiable in different texts, documents and communications from the subjects that are being analyzed. However, it is possible to trace which ones are most dominant in the SDGs' 'order of discourses' by identifying the dominant rationalities, techniques and subjectivities that play a role in the examined field, using the following approach to inquiry and analysis:

Figure 3: Discourse Analytical Approach in This Research

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3.4. Research Approach and Methods

The study combined descriptive and analytical research in four main phases. The first phase consisted of text analysis of outcome documents from Rio+20, and key texts from the SDG process. The second phase comprised a similar text and document analysis of key statements from the AP-RCEM group in the period 2014-2018.

The researcher's presence and participation at numerous events, workshops, conferences and forums focusing on the SDGs and their implementation created the basis for the participatory observation of the 3rd phase of the study. This element elaborated on the data from phases 1 and 2 to see how, during discussions, interventions, and conversations the official 'positionality' of the SDGs were resisted or taken on board, and which rationalities dominated in those events.

The fourth phase of this research comprised 11 interviews with volunteers of the AP-RCEM platform to revisit the findings from phases 1 through 3 and to allow the richness of interview responses to further inform and refine prior analytical work. The research also undertook additional unstructured interviews with several key members of the AP-RCEM to discuss the engagement space and their motivations for participation. Data from the conversations and interviews that made up the collection strategy of Phase 4 was with individuals that were (or are) active members of the AP-RCEM. Interviewees were selected based on purposeful selection, "…deliberately to provide information that is particularly relevant […], and that can't be gotten as well from other choices" (Maxwell, 2013,

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p. 98). Another important dimension this phase examined was related to how the AP-RCEM platform created spaces of influence and how individuals used the platform to promote personal, organizational or other views and positions.

Incidentally, the data collection for Phase 4 coincided with an external evaluation of AP-RCEM's activities, successes and challenges. I was involved in this evaluation that took place between December 2018-September 2019 as an advisor, but carried out several interviews during that time helping the two co-authors structure and implement the evaluation (forthcoming). Taking advantage of the considerable information gathering effort linked to this evaluation therefore allowed examining more deeply how the CSO platform functions as space for grassroot voices to enter the 'official' processes and influence it. At the same time the 'authentic' voices from the AP-RCEM grass-roots platform lent credibility to the official process but also sometimes became instrumentalized by the UN for their purposes of supporting the 'regional' level of governance, a level that at least in Asia-Pacific has been struggling with a lack of legitimacy.

Using hand coding I then deconstructed the different discursive governmentalities that the official SDG process proposed and the reactions towards these proposals and other areas of protest that the CSOs highlighted and/or used in their agendas, articulating their strategic aims and priorities. I extracted quotations and statements when they illustrated rationalities, techniques, or subjectivities of different forms of government and belonging to different discourses. From this hand coding, collected data was coded according

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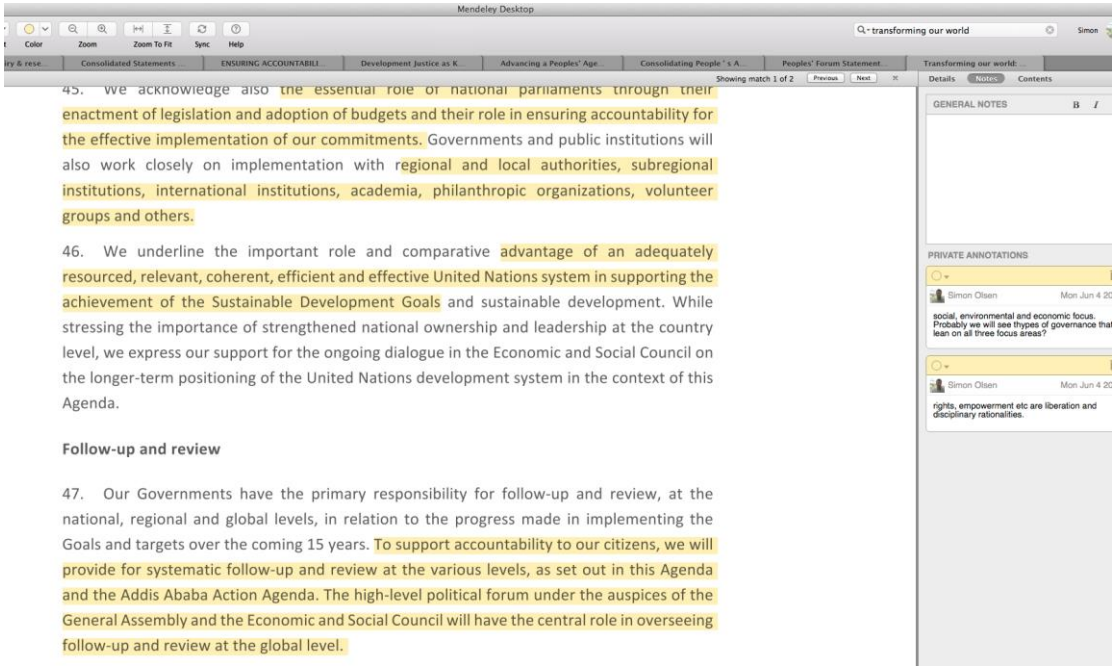
to different categories, which allowed different patterns to emerge regarding what types of governing were promoted and opposed and how the CSO platform went about negotiating space to gain influence in official processes on the SDGs in the Asia-Pacific region.

The screenshots below outline how I conducted the analysis in phases 1 and 2. The tables consisting of different categories of governing, and which provide much more detail, are annexed to the dissertation (Annexes 1-5). Documents and text were first read and coded in *Mendeley* (Figure 4), where color-coded governmentalities and annotations guided the initial analysis.

Figure 4: Forms of Government Promoted in Agenda 2030



The identified governmentalities were then extracted and ordered into three main categories of governing (Figure 3). The three columns derived from existing governmentality analytics of environmental governance (Fletcher, 2017), which built on Foucault's work on governmentality and denote sovereign,

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liberal, and liberation forms of power. These categories were broad, and thus, the liberal category included liberal and neoliberal rationalities and techniques, whereas sovereign forms of power also included disciplinary forms. However, for the analysis this step was sufficient since it enabled extraction of governmentalities from the documents that could subsequently be extracted and written into the analytical narrative of Chapter 5.

Figure 5: Categories of Power in Agenda 2030

Types of Government Highlighted in the 2030 Agenda		
Sovereign/disciplinary	**Advanced Liberal (market, international)**	**Liberation/radical**
circumstances, including by restructuring taxation and phasing out those harmful subsidies • …effectively regulate harvesting and end overfishing, illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and destructive fishing practices • …conserve at least 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas, consistent with national and international law • …prohibit certain forms of fisheries subsidies which contribute to overcapacity and overfishing	institutions and strengthen the implementation of such regulations • Encourage official development assistance and financial flows, including foreign direct investment • reduce to less than 3 per cent the transaction costs of migrant remittances and eliminate remittance corridors with costs higher than 5 per cent • By 2030, ensure that people everywhere have the relevant information and awareness for sustainable development and lifestyles in harmony with nature • Support developing countries to strengthen their scientific and technological capacity to move towards more sustainable • Develop and implement tools to monitor sustainable development impacts for sustainable tourism • Rationalize inefficient fossil-fuel subsidies that encourage wasteful consumption by removing market distortions, in accordance with national circumstances, including by restructuring taxation and phasing out those harmful subsidies • Improve education, awareness-raising and human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning	including through the parallel elimination of all forms of agricultural export subsidies and all export measures with equivalent effect • Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws • Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women • …Support and strengthen the participation of local communities in improving water and sanitation

The research in Phase 2, which concerned the CSOs, used a similar approach. Figures 6 and 7 and show how I identified initial rationalities and techniques through coding and annotating in *Mendeley*, after which they were exported to *Excel* where I deconstructed them according to the analytical framework outlined in Chapter 2.

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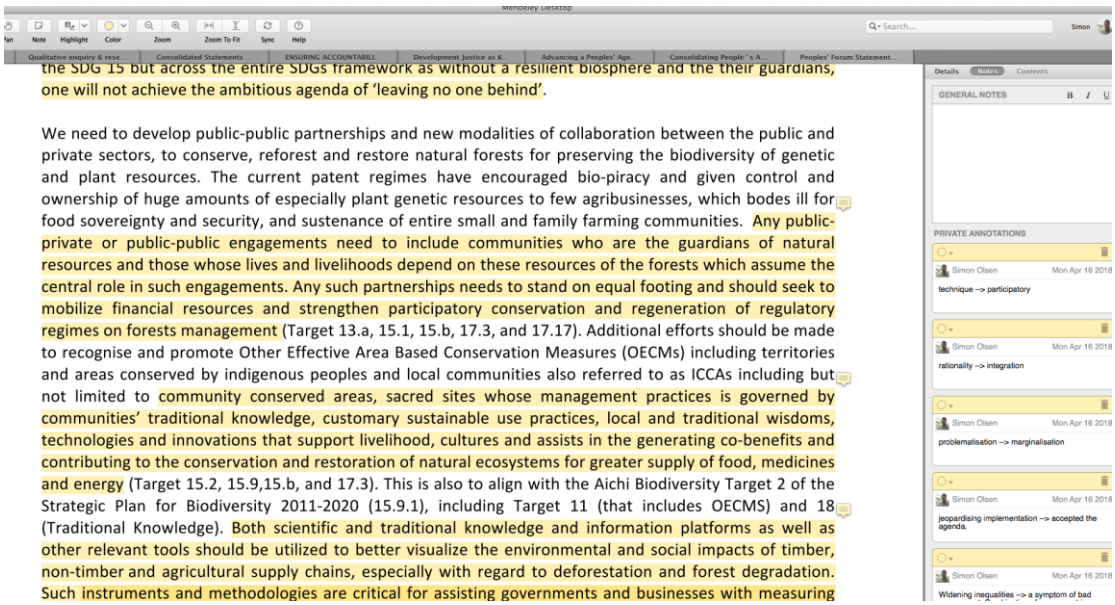
Figure 6: Governmentalities Used and Refused by the CSOs



the SDG 15 but across the entire SDGs framework as without a resilient biosphere and the their guardians, one will not achieve the ambitious agenda of 'leaving no one behind'.

We need to develop public-public partnerships and new modalities of collaboration between the public and private sectors, to conserve, reforest and restore natural forests for preserving the biodiversity of genetic and plant resources. The current patent regimes have encouraged bio-piracy and given control and ownership of huge amounts of especially plant genetic resources to few agribusinesses, which bodes ill for food sovereignty and security, and sustenance of entire small and family farming communities. Any public-private or public-public engagements need to include communities who are the guardians of natural resources and those whose lives and livelihoods depend on these resources of the forests which assume the central role in such engagements. Any such partnerships needs to stand on equal footing and should seek to mobilize financial resources and strengthen participatory conservation and regeneration of regulatory regimes on forests management (Target 13.a, 15.1, 15.b, 17.3, and 17.17). Additional efforts should be made to recognise and promote Other Effective Area Based Conservation Measures (OECMs) including territories and areas conserved by indigenous peoples and local communities also referred to as ICCAs including but not limited to community conserved areas, sacred sites whose management practices is governed by communities' traditional knowledge, customary sustainable use practices, local and traditional wisdoms, technologies and innovations that support livelihood, cultures and assists in the generating co-benefits and contributing to the conservation and restoration of natural ecosystems for greater supply of food, medicines and energy (Target 15.2, 15.9,15.b, and 17.3). This is also to align with the Aichi Biodiversity Target 2 of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 (15.9.1), including Target 11 (that includes OECMS) and 18 (Traditional Knowledge). Both scientific and traditional knowledge and information platforms as well as other relevant tools should be utilized to better visualize the environmental and social impacts of timber, non-timber and agricultural supply chains, especially with regard to deforestation and forest degradation. Such instruments and methodologies are critical for assisting governments and businesses with measuring

GENERAL NOTES

PRIVATE ANNOTATIONS

Simon Olsen Mon Apr 16 2018
technique --> participatory

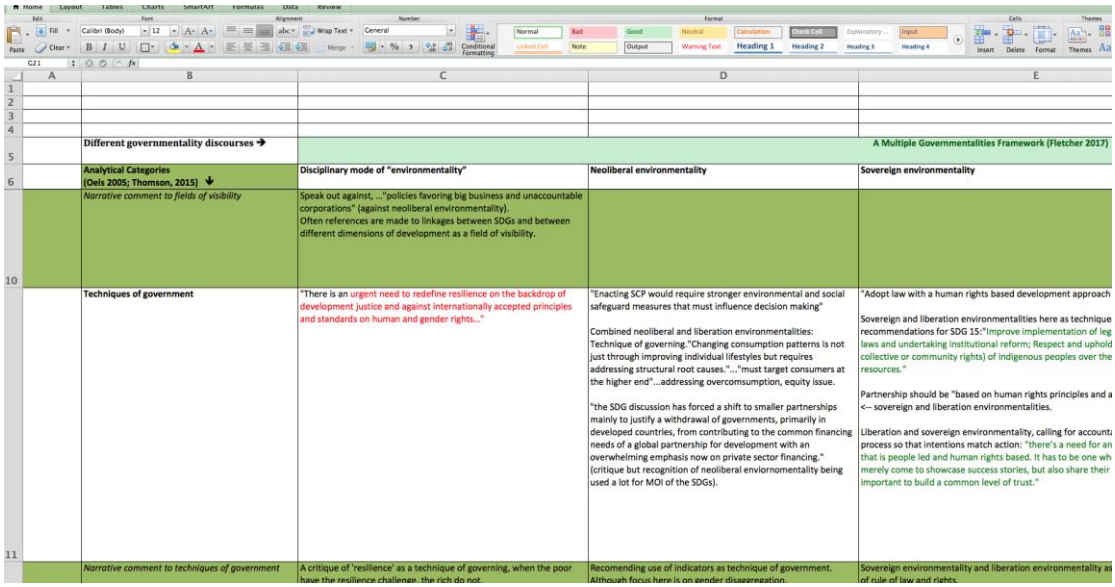
Simon Olsen Mon Apr 16 2018
rationality --> integration

Simon Olsen Mon Apr 16 2018
problematisation --> marginalisation

Simon Olsen Mon Apr 16 2018
jeopardising implementation --> accepted the agenda.

Simon Olsen Mon Apr 16 2018
Widening inequalities --> a symptom of bad

Figure 7: Screenshot of CSO Data in Excel



	A	B	C	D	E
5		Different governmentality discourses →			A Multiple Governmentalities Framework (Fletcher 2017)
6		Analytical Categories (Oels 2005; Thomson, 2015) ↓	Disciplinary mode of "environmentality"	Neoliberal environmentality	Sovereign environmentality
10		*Narrative comment to fields of visibility*	Speak out against, .."policies favoring big business and unaccountable corporations" (against neoliberal environmentality). Often references are made to linkages between SDGs and between different dimensions of development as a field of visibility.		
11		Techniques of government	"There is an urgent need to redefine resilience on the backdrop of development justice and against internationally accepted principles and standards on human and gender rights..."	"Enacting SCP would require stronger environmental and social safeguard measures that must influence decision making" Combined neoliberal and liberation environmentalities: Technique of governing."Changing consumption patterns is not just through improving individual lifestyles but requires addressing structural root causes."..."must target consumers at the higher end"...addressing overconsumption, equity issue. "the SDG discussion has forced a shift to smaller partnerships mainly to justify a withdrawal of governments, primarily in developed countries, from contributing to the common financing needs of a global partnership for development with an overwhelming emphasis now on private sector financing." (critique but recognition of neoliberal enviornmentality being used a lot for MOI of the SDGs).	"Adopt law with a human rights based development approach Sovereign and liberation environmentalities here as technique recommendations for SDG 15:"Improve implementation of leg laws and undertaking institutional reform; Respect and uphold collective or community rights) of indigenous peoples over the resources." Partnership should be "based on human rights principles and a <-- sovereign and liberation environmentalities. Liberation and sovereign environmentality, calling for account process so that intentions match action: "there's a need for an that is people led and human rights based. It has to be one wh merely come to showcase success stories, but also share their important to build a common level of trust."
		Narrative comment to techniques of government	A critique of 'resilience' as a technique of governing, when the poor have the resilience challenge, the rich do not	Recomending use of indicators as technique of government. Although focus here is on gender disaggregation	Sovereign environmentality and liberation environmentality as of rule of law and rights

For Phase 3, which comprised participatory observation, I collected and analyzed field notes from 31 different relevant events, calls, formal and informal meetings directly related to the SDGs.[2] These sources spanned the time 2011- 2018 and concerned meetings of 'experts', side-events at the UN, notes from calls and

[2] Available at: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1QDAjQ8P928yKzjRJagAliLDSB3WE3yaD

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internal meetings with the CSOs, international workshops on the SDGs and others. I chose the sources based on their relevancy for the SDGs and Agenda 2030. These notes cover 10 different meetings and conferences of primarily governmental and intergovernmental inputs; 11 workshops and forums of 'experts', and 10 public and internal meetings with CSOs. For Phase 4, the data gathering comprised interviews with 11 informants from the CSOs as well as supplemental conversations with key AP-RCEM members. I selected content and events as relevant for this analysis if it (i) was directly deliberating on the SDGs, or related to the SDGs; and (ii) or it contained inputs from CSOs.

3.5. Fieldwork

Whereas phases 1-3 used the simple question on 'what forms of government or governance are promoted or resisted' to filter out key information on the contesting governmentalities and forms of power, Phase 4 used open questions specifically aimed at discussing contested governmentalities in interviews with the CSOs and to elicit reactions and reflections from the CSOs on their role, impacts and motivations for participation in international processes.

3.5.1 Phase One

The first phase was based on text analysis of key written documents from the main SDG processes. It analyzed the following texts:

- The Rio+20 Outcome Document *The Future We Want* (United Nations, 2012)
- *Transforming Our World: 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (United Nations General Assembly, 2015a)

3.5.2 Phase Two

The second phase analyzed the following documents:

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- *Concept Paper: A Regional CSO/Stakeholder Engagement Mechanism* (Asia-Pacific Regional CSO Engagement Mechanism, 2014b)
- *Bangkok Civil Society Declaration: From Inclusive to Just Development* (Asia-Pacific Regional CSO Engagement Mechanism, 2013)
- *Consolidated Statements/CSO Declarations* annually by the AP-RCEM 2014-2018 (five documents)

3.5.3 Phase Three

Phase 3 drew its data from participatory observation. Observations were recorded as notes taken during workshops, meetings, online conference calls and similar events. I had produced these notes at events that focused on sustainability and the SDGs, both prior to 2015 as well as after the 2030 Agenda had been agreed upon and implementation discussions began to ensue. The observations and notes comprised over 300 pages of material (Table 2, Chapter 3) and were produced during sustainable development focused events between 2011 and 2019. While the onus of these observations and notes were not all unequivocally around rationalities and governmentalities surrounding the SDGs, the focus was on different aspects of governance for sustainable development and therefore distinct rationalities and techniques of governing, as well as critique points emerged from the notes and observations.

The following table lists these events separating them into three categories of government, expert and AP-RCEM, although overlap and observations across these three categories happened at events with such primary audiences due to their crosscutting and inclusive set-up.

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Table 6: List of Observed Events

Government	Expert	CSOs (AP-RCEM)
1. Notes on IFSD discussions, Rio+20, June 2012, Rio de Janeiro,	1. Meeting notes, 2nd Session PrepCom for Rio+20, 15-16 Dec 2011 New York	1. Full meeting summary AP-RCEM coordination meeting 12-13 Nov 2014, Bangkok
2. Notes and observations OWG 8, 1-8 Feb 2014, New York	2. Session notes, ISAP 28-29 July 2015, Yokohama	2. Full notes AP-RCEM call, 19 June 2015
3. Full session notes, IRF retreat 10-11 Feb 2014, New York	3. Full notes and observations, ESCAP SDGs week 2016	3. Full notes AP-RCEM meeting Oct 8 2015
4. Notes and observations, OWG 12, 16-20 June 2014, New York	4. Full notes, Sustainable Development Transition Forum (SDTF) 17-19 Nov 2015, Incheon	4. Notes, ESCAP, AP-RCEM call, 5 Feb 2016; 14 Sept 2016, Asia-Pacific
5. Notes and observations, SD Summit 25-27 Sept 2015, New York	5. Full notes, Seoul Majors' Forum on Climate Change 2016	5. Key observations, RCEM internal meeting Dec 22-23 2016, Chiang Mai
6. Full notes, SDGs workshop ASEF, 5-6 Nov 2015, Phnom Penh	6. Full notes, Berlin conference on Jumpstarting the SDGs 2-4 May 2016, Berlin	6. AP-RCEM internal meeting Chiang Mai Dec 2016 (entire minutes)
7. Notes and observations, APFSD 3-6 April 2016 Bangkok	7. Session notes, ISAP, 12-13 July 2016, Yokohama	7. Notes from APFSD 2016, breakout session on CSOs, 6 April 2016, Bangkok
8. Full notes, JICA global online workshop on SDGs, Aug 8-9 2016, Tokyo	8. Full notes and observations, ESCAP SDGs week, Dec 2-4 2016, Bangkok	8. Notes APPFSD 27-31 March 2017 (and APFSD from CSO perspective), Bangkok
9. Notes and observations, APFSD, 29-31 March, 2017 Bangkok	9. Full minutes, ADB internal interviews, 7-11 Aug 2017	9. Notes, ESCAP AP-RCEM call 11 Jan 2017, Asia-Pacific
10. Notes and observations, APFSD 28-31 March 2018, Bangkok	10. Full notes, ESCAP EGM on Stakeholder Engagement, 23-25 Aug 2017	10. AP-RCEM call about CSO accreditation issues, Jan 27 2017
	11. Full notes and observations, 30-31 Oct 2018, Incheon	11. Notes, CSO Forum APCFSD, 28-31 March 2018, Bangkok
		12. Notes AP-RCEM call 8 Nov 2018
Total: 108 pages	**Total: 116 pages**	**Total: 114 pages**

To analyze them, the notes and observations were first split into three categories representing the actors most often present or interviewed at the attended events. These categories were (i) governmental representatives; (ii) experts and academia; and (iii) CSOs. The expectation was that these three main groups would correspond to the three main narratives and rationalities used as analytical lens in the thesis. In that perspective, governments were expected to

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directly or indirectly represent and support mostly sovereign types of power. Experts, who in the sustainable development field were often from international organizations, including various agencies of the UN, would represent liberal, technocrat and neoliberal narratives, and the CSOs would then predominantly represent radical alternatives and 'liberation governmentalities' in conjunction with the previous two sets of rationalities and approaches to governing.

The real picture that emerged, however, was somewhat complex. For one because the analysis of the data revealed that different rationalities often combined or appeared together no matter who (re)presented them, and also because subjectivities were malleable in the sense that individuals would take on several almost simultaneously. Some CSOs were sometimes from large international networks that promoted agendas very similar to experts from international organizations, and at other times, governmental representatives were also called upon as experts. Regardless, the longitudinal qualitative analysis of the notes and observations revealed the combination and context of different rationalities that existed in the context of the sustainable development agenda and the subsequent SDGs.

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3.5.4 Phase Four

In the fourth phase I approached AP-RCEM members to ask them follow-up questions focused on understanding more deeply their purpose and objectives for engaging with civil society, understanding their stance towards different forms of power, aiming to validate and contest findings from previous research phases. This phase also looked at challenges and successes of the AP-RCEM as an engagement platform to evaluate whether the SDGs had provided an occasion to

reinvent CSO space for critical voices or whether those critical voices were in any way muted, coerced or instrumentalized by the official process towards ends other than promoting the positions of AP-RCEM. The latter did in fact happen in some cases, where positions were shared or originated from the UN, which were then taken on board by the CSOs. Interviews revealed that such cross-lobbying across stakeholder groups was in fact a common strategy to gain support of certain messages, when some stakeholders could message more strongly than others. Phase 4 also drew secondary data, which I collected with two other colleagues for an external evaluation of AP-RCEM, which AP-RCEM and ESCAP commissioned in late 2018. At the first occasion, interviews were undertaken at an annual UNEP regional environmental ministers meeting in Singapore, held 23-25 January 2019, and where AP-RCEM's environmental working group were present. Informal conversations were had at this event and on the sidelines of the 2019 APFSD, which took place 23-29 March 2019 in Bangkok. Summarizing the four main phases of research undertaken, the table below describes the relationship of research methods to the original research questions.

Table 7: Research Questions and Methods

Research Questions	Research Methods
Q1: How do the SDGs reproduce or change the mainstream development/sustainable development narrative?	Text analysis of the official SDG text and related documents in recent SD discourse identifying key promoted forms of government in the official SDG text.
Q2: How do civil society actors engage with the SDGs at the regional level?	Text analysis identifying key promoted forms of government in statements by the AP-RCEM, checked by interviews for additional in-depth reveal of subjectivities and rationalities related to neoliberalism
Q3: How do the SDGs shape regional engagement space between civil society and other actors?	Participatory observation and interviews to elicit people's impressions of engagement since 2030 Agenda in the Asia-Pacific region.
Q4: How do regional civil society engagement mechanisms negotiate and promote their spaces and positions in the official and non-official tracks?	Participatory observation and interviews to elicit people's impressions of engagement since 2030 Agenda in the Asia-Pacific region.

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The analysis in this research looked broadly at how the SDGs proposed that a move towards sustainable development best be governed and how the SDGs' provided space and influence of the UN, experts, and alternative more radical views. For the latter, the research compared the AP-RCEM's positions and their struggle with the official line of the SDGs. This provided conceptual insights to capture the challenges and paradoxes inherent in the concept of sustainable development, its promotion by powerful interest groups at the international levels, and challenges to predominant views and positions by the AP-RCEM.

3.6. Limitations and Ethical Issues

A first limitation of this research related to the universality and applicability of the expected research findings. Since the general philosophical and ontological base of this research required a reflexive and interpretive approach (Yanow, 2000) to dissecting the rationalities, techniques and subjectivities that met and contested under the SDGs, this research did not aim to develop a universally applicable hypothesis of the sustainable development discourse at this stage, but rather focused on analyzing the different forms of power and government that contest in the SDGs to arrive at a contemporary diagnosis of governing for sustainable development and its prospects for transformation.

Second, specifically for Phase 3, the notes that generated data for this phase were, at least partly, undertaken before this research commenced. I thus had not intended to observe and record results for specific use in this dissertation, which created a potential unevenness in the resulting data set.

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A third limitation had to do with researcher's bias. Since I had been professionally and personally engaged in the AP-RCEM for the entire time span of its operations, a level of sentimentality could be expected (Becker, 1967, 1998). Remaining critical to the data deriving from the examined documents, statements and interviews approached this bias. At the same time, the access, familiarity, and trust that I had achieved through my continuous engagement with AP-RCEM and its members enabled a deep and critical inquiry that produced varied responses to uncover not only how sustainable development and the SDGs reproduce some existing power dynamics while challenging others but also showed the dynamics of civil society participation.

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Chapter 4: Results of Data Collection

4.1. Analytical Context

This chapter presents data gathered across the four phases but separates global from regional levels, and official from 'unofficial' forums of data collection in order to better match the focus of the research questions.

The chapter starts with an analysis of the Rio+20 Outcome (2012) and then presents findings from notes and observations from the processes that ultimately led to the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. It then continues with a presentation of findings from document analysis of the Asia-Pacific regional response based on official UN documents, official CSO statements, as well as notes and observations from the Asia-Pacific regional level in the period 2014-2019.

4.2. The Global SD Process around Rio+20

The Rio+20 Conference took place in Rio de Janeiro in June 2012 and was the culmination of several years of preparations by the UN and member states, but to make it happen required lobbying and preparations from non-state actors, as well as endorsement from the main architect of the original Earth Summit, Maurice Strong (Dodds, Laguna-Celis, & Thompson, 2014). Apart from reaffirming the decisions and outcomes, and principles of previous sustainable development Summits, the Rio+20 conference's two main themes were (i) A Green Economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication; and (ii) the Institutional Framework for Sustainable Development.

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The focus on those two themes indicated that the quest for sustainability of development depended on an institutional framework aimed at "strengthening coherence, coordination, avoiding duplication of efforts, and reviewing progress" (United Nations, 2012, para. 75), to "enhance coherence, reduce fragmentation and overlap and increase effectiveness, efficiency and transparency, while reinforcing coordination and cooperation (para 76 d). It thus became a matter of technical fixes and getting the institutional side right to make 'better' decisions, which are a mix of liberal and advanced liberal techniques of governing (referring back to Table 1 in Chapter 2). As for the green economy, governments had found it difficult to agree on a definition of the approach. It had been criticized for allowing for a 'commodification of nature'. Related concepts, such as Planetary Boundaries, planetary tipping points, and planetary carrying capacity, which the research community had proposed in the preparations to the Conference, were not in the outcome document. Instead it brimmed over with soft commitments and language such as 'promote'; 'encourage'; 'recognise'. The outcome of the conference produced no internationally agreed and legally binding agreement (as the original Earth Summit did). The Rio+20 outcome document contained a combination of various rationalities, as seen in the promotion of a "mix of measures, including regulatory, voluntary and others" (TFWW, para 63, 2012) at play even ahead of the SDGs, indicating what type of agreement the SDGs would be and what types of government different actors would promote to become a part of the Agenda.

Rio+20 outcomes abounded with references to rationalities promoting the ecological modernization narrative and advanced liberal approaches to

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governing. Examples included the importance of international cooperation (para 11), technology transfer (paras 19, 58 f, 73 and others); of an open and liberalized global trade system (para 281); innovation (paras 19, 58 d, 72, and others); the reliance on data (paras 62, 63, 76 d and others), targets and indicators to track progress towards sustainable development (paras 104, 237, and 250) and the importance of promoting best practices (paras 47, 66 d, 85 I, 88 h and others) and voluntary sharing of experiences (paras 64, 76 f, and others) were also highlighted. While some of these measures could be strong and enforceable, the document was also filled with softer qualifiers such as 'as appropriate' (paras 42, 43, 47 and in 29 other instances in the document); 'encourage' (paras 43, 49 and in 47 other instances in the document). The term 'promote' (paras, 6, 9, 23, and in 66 other instances in the document) indicates soft and indirect forms of governing and is far removed from any binding sovereign law and regulation and is thus advanced liberal/neoliberal (Table 1, Chapter 2).

Other examples of advanced liberal rationalities and governing techniques concerned institutional coherence, coordination and efficiency. These were perhaps less controversial but nonetheless signified the reliance on voluntary and indirect governmentalities for sustainable development. It could, on the one hand, signify the success of a presumed global liberal society having gradually leveled the power relations between countries so that no stark north-south dichotomy could dictate who should do what, but the promotion of such voluntary forms of government also left responsibilities to act in a limbo where it could be difficult to hold anyone accountable.

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Another signifier of an advanced liberal worldview was where the document urged states "to refrain from promulgating and applying any unilateral economic, financial or trade measures" (para 26). This rationality was repeated in sections in the Green Economy, stating that it should "…not constitute a means of arbitrary or unjustifiable discrimination or a disguised restriction on international trade…" (para 58 h). The recognition that forms of finance necessary to implement sustainable development would have to, alongside traditional means (para 253), come from innovative sources of financing, was also spelled out, showing that sustainable development in the 21st century would be financed by other 'untraditional' sources without going into much detail. Moreover, the important financing subject was left for a separate process on financing for sustainable development, which produced an outcome that became criticized for lacking clear commitments to financing of Agenda 2030 (Institute for Global Environmental Strategies, 2015).

Mixes of techniques and rationalities that combined sovereign, liberal and more radical 'liberation' mentalities were also in the document. These included the emphasis on renewed and strengthened global partnership (para 34) as advanced liberal rationality; the recognition of the need for "broader measures of progress to complement gross domestic product" (para 38) as an example of liberation governmentality, and combinations of sovereign techniques of government to advance neoliberal rationalities, for example in the support for, "…national regulatory and policy frameworks that enable business and industry to advance sustainable development initiatives… (para 46). Other examples of combined rationalities and techniques of governing were the need for

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governmental regulation i.e. 'create enabling environments' (para 127) to facilitate investments in energy efficiency, sustainable tourism or others. None of these interventions would harm the overall priority towards economic growth and capitalism, but were recommendations solidly anchored in current advanced liberal and neoliberal economy. Another clear example of the move towards advanced liberal forms of governmentality rather than direct government intervention was in the promotion of local livelihoods, and the recognition of traditional knowledge as a measure to increase equity, and as important step to create the "conditions needed […] to sustainably manage forests" (para 193), i.e. the assumption was the people would on their own enact the wish of conserving forests if they were capacitated towards that end, which is an exact example of the environmentality described by Agrawal (Agrawal, 2005).

The mosaic of approaches to governance for sustainable development became further elaborated through emphases on sovereign types of governing. Sometimes this appeared purely as affirmation of sovereign powers, exemplified by the importance of national and subnational land tenure, decision making and benefit sharing, "in accordance with national legislation" (paras 69, 131, 193 and others), or emphasizing the importance of "national circumstances" (para 56), and "respect each country's national sovereignty" (para 58 b).

A few governments contributed more radical rationalities. For example, the Government of Bolivia had advocated for Rights of Mother Earth, the Human Right to water and other examples of disciplinary forms of governing anchored in countries sovereign right. In a similar vein, the Kenyan government had

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argued for stronger outcomes from Rio+20 stating that "This is not about groups this is about one earth…we need something different and stronger as outcome of this conference" (Researcher's observations, Rio+20, June 2012).

The regional level, in particular the UN's regional commissions and their subregional offices, also benefited from Rio+20. The outcome document emphasized their importance in several places (paras 68, 100, and 185), and promoted "more efficient and effective capacity-building, development and implementation of regional agreements and arrangements as appropriate, and exchange of information, best practices and lessons learned." (para 100), as a technique to achieve the balanced integration of sustainable development. This empowerment of the regional level would have some impact on the engagement spaces, which the AP-RCEM would later go on to create. However, overall what dominated in the Future We Want (TFWW) was a reaffirmation of the advanced liberal (and neoliberal), sometimes enabled by sovereign powers, and primarily achievable by technical and rational approaches that could make the journey towards sustainable development a matter of the right mix of different types of government.

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4.3.1. The Global SDGs Process

One of the most notable outcomes of Rio+20 was the mandate for the UN to set in motion a process to define and agree on a set of development goals to replace the exiting MDGs. The outcome of the Rio+20 conference had already defined the details that came to characterize the SDGs, including that they "should be action-oriented, concise and easy to communicate, limited in number, aspirational,

global in nature and universally applicable" (United Nations, 2012, para. 247). That process eventually led to a set of 17 SDGs with 169 targets.

The process to define the SDGs was markedly different from past processes on sustainable development. Instead of relying on Secretary General appointed expert panels, Rio+20 mandated an intergovernmental process, which came to consist of countries from north and south debating on what should become the future SDGs. This signified a break with ODA-focused north-south development discourse, moving towards a more horizontal, egalitarian and democratic governance process. The trouble was that there was no way to move on from the north-south relationship, which were often based on bi- and multilateral government-to-government arrangements and were based on long-exiting historic traditions and agreements and underlying interests and power hierarchies, to something less hierarchic without also promoting advanced liberal, and also neoliberal approaches to governing.

The culmination of the lengthy and inclusive OWG process came at the SD Summit in September 2015, where all governments congregated to formally agree on the SDGs and the agenda. This event provided the main stage for High Level country delegates to cement their political commitment to sustainability. Governments performed 'radical' and ambitious rationalities and some examples as observed (Researcher's observations, New York, September 2015) included the government of France, which talked about the importance of a global financial transactions tax, and Croatia who claimed that the SDGs were a blueprint for our better future, an obligation, and that 'we owe it to our children'.

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Germany said the UN required reform to meet current challenges and that the SDGs should combat not symptoms but root causes of unsustainability at all levels. Even the US followed this line of performance, stating that climate action was a moral calling; that development is threatened by war; and that combating illicit finance should be a global effort. They also highlighted development problems of terrorism, viruses, pandemics, financial markets and climate to argue for an integrated world in which no one is independent from each other's well-being and that cooperation was necessary. Neoliberal governmentalities were also emphasized, for example by Denmark, who interpreted Rights as technique of self governance, as seen in their comment during the event: "Human Rights and Gender Rights–thereby unleashing the power of the individual for the common good, and that women are key drivers of sustainable development" The representative did not mention that the Danish government at that time had just proposed to cut 350 Million USD of their development aid (to bring to 0.7% of GDP), which would be the lowest in 40 years.

4.3.2. Document Analysis: The 2030 Agenda and the SDGs

Overall, the 2030 Agenda (United Nations General Assembly, 2015a) promoted three distinct governmentalities in the context of the SDGs and sustainable development that were often linked but sometimes lone standing, as follows:

(i) Sovereign, national disciplinary type

(ii) Liberal and advanced liberal type

(iii) Liberation, rights based, justice type

The first type (coded red in the table in Annex 2), is characterized through references to 'respect national policies and priorities' (SDG 12.7) and

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'circumstances' (SDG 12.C), importance of 'full national sovereignty' (United Nations, 2015, para 18), national institutions, parliaments (para 45), and policy space (para 21). It is also classified by references to measures that only governments can take due to their executive powers such as enforcement (SDG 5.C, and SDG 16.B), prohibition of certain types of fisheries (SDG 14.6), ending poaching and trafficking of illegal wildlife (SDG 15.7); or otherwise effectively regulate an issue. The importance of national ownership of the Agenda was also emphasized (para 74.a). In addition, the aspect of respecting national circumstances was often added onto elements of liberation type of government in places where the agenda referred to justice, human rights and inclusion (para. 3) to qualify them against governments' sovereign power and decisions, since after all Agenda 2030 was an intergovernmental agreement and could not challenge what governments do in their national jurisdictions.

The second type of advanced liberal and neoliberal forms of governing was the one most strongly reflected in the agenda (see Annex 2). This type of governing was characterized by references to different types of management, for example in the case of management of natural resources or ecosystems (para. 33 and many others); references to international law and the international system as a whole (para. 18 and others). A prominent signifying component also pertained to repeated references to the importance of the private sector (paras. 33, 41 and others), partnerships (para 60, others), markets (2.3; 9.3; others), and the recognition 'that domestic resources are first and foremost generated by economic growth, supported by an enabling environment at all levels' (para 66). Phrases such as 'sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth;

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strengthening of countries' productive capacities, eco-tourism and other commercial activities; free and open trade and market access; global citizenship, international cooperation and the UN Apparatus, acknowledgement of the role of the diverse private sector, ranging from micro-enterprises to cooperatives to multinationals, Aid-For-Trade and many others also signified the embrace of the private sector and the liberal-to neoliberal content of the SDGs in the document.

Apart from references to the private sector and its activities necessary primarily for funding and implementation of the agenda, the document also referred to the importance of science, data, and different capacities, and fiscal policy tools (subsidy removal), necessary for managing and tracking implementation of the SDGs. The focus on different capacities and technologies is reminiscent of ecological modernization discourse (Bäckstrand & Lövbrand, 2006), where once technology and skills are up to par, environmental and developmental challenges can be managed, provided governance is 'good enough'.

The emphasis of broad ownership of the agenda signified the overall governmentality of the SDGs. Relying on participatory rather than just expert-led process to define the SDGs strengthened ownership of outcomes. In this way, the UN has been able to indirectly influence and govern the conduct of participating agents. Specific actions were not prescribed; instead the importance of national circumstances was emphasized. However, in committing to these goals the governments (and other actors) would also commit to taking action, perhaps more action, than if a certain cause of action had been prescribed top-down.

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The third type of governing shows that the agenda in fact did go further than business-as-usual. Both the accompanying text and the goals and targets themselves contained references to human rights, gender equality, justice and other types of rights (coded green in the table in Annex 2). These references did not appear as frequently as those concerning, for instance, the private sector's engagement, but they were there, and could subsequently be used by stakeholders to claim their space, such as the AP-RCEM did. Significant terms included references to the importance of peoples' control over land and productive resources, pro-poor and gender-sensitivity and equality; disaggregation of data to reflect the situations of different parts of populations; removal of subsidies (although also linked to the advanced liberal type of governing); undertaking of 'reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources' (SDG target 1.4); strengthening and supporting community engagement, promotion of local culture and products; respect for human rights and justice (SDG 15).

While the SDG document mentioned such potentially radical elements, they were often caveated with reflective sentences stating that these rights should be promoted in the context of national realities, which then reinforced the importance of sovereign governments. However qualified these references to rights, they did create anchors for the 'liberation environmentalities' and for the continued engagement of actors who could call for this type of governing. Comparing the above three types of government it is also interesting to note that they did not always appear separate from each other, but in some cases were

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combined. For example, this happened at the emphasis of the importance of ODA, which had its roots in decisions and priorities of sovereign types of governance, that was then supposedly used to 'catalyse additional resource mobilization from other sources (public and private)' (para 44). Another example was the use of ICTs to promote empowerment of women (5.b); or undertaking reforms 'to give women equal rights…in accordance with national laws' (5.a). These are where different types of governing were combined and showed the intertwining of discourses and governmentalities. The next section looks more in depth at that, based on the regional UN response, and the analysis of statements by the AP-RCEM.

4.4. The Regional Responses

As previous sections pointed out, the global SDGs continued the compromise between economic growth and environmental conservation. As such, the 2030 Agenda remained firmly a 'development' agenda, rather than one of radical change and promoted liberal as well as neoliberal rationalities to achieve that balance. Despite this relative dominance of the liberal, the SDGs contained ample anchors of more radical and 'liberation' nature, which were used by the AP-RCEM to advocate and rally for their cause of ' Development Justice. The official regional UN response, whose central role had been re-empowered in Rio+20 and Agenda 2030, had moved to take the agenda forward and ensure their own relevance and survival along the way.

4.4.1. The APFSD and ESCAP's Regional Roadmap

The main forum for debate at the regional level was ESCAP's annual Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD). The Asia-Pacific UN Commission

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had had regular regional events to collect regional views, voices and inputs in anticipation of Agenda 2030 although there had been no guarantee that UN Member States would politically or financially support a regional mechanism of follow-up and review. But there was precedence, because such a mechanism had existed in the past under the Commission on Sustainable Development; which had had regionally mandated Regional Implementation Meetings (RIMs) to discuss progress on agreements made in the original Rio Earth Summit and the 2002 Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD). Once the global Commission on Sustainable Development ceased operations and gave way to the HLPF, a regional follow-up effort was expected. In 2014 ESCAP held its first APFSD, which became institutionalized (and sanctioned) by governments on the condition that it would not add an undue additional reporting burden and would not overlap with the commitment to report annually at the global HLPF. Governments had emphasized that "follow-up and review should be country led and taken into account national policies and practices" (Pakistan). CSOs began pointing out systemic barriers to sustainable development, stating that dominant macroeconomic policies were impeding the realization of human rights; and that governmental institutions needed to support greater redistribution of wealth (AP-RCEM, 2015).

The importance of nation states' governments as architects of the 2030 Agenda through the OWG cannot be over stated, as one participant from the expert community recognised during a meeting in Yokohama in 2016, "…SDGs and climate are now national interest issues, that is a huge difference from before. When it is national interest, then there is a system of implementation at domestic

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level, and we don't have to rely on international law (which has not helped in the past)." As previous sections showed, despite being a global mechanism, the SDGs' process had reinforced the importance of the national level of all states and thereby reaffirmed the importance of sovereign powers.

A key element that illustrated the tension between the national and the international was a roadmap for regional implementation of the 2030 Agenda – an initiative by ESCAP, which had initially found little support among member states in the region. The original idea for this roadmap had come from ESCAP, and the secretariat had, in a somewhat consultative process, created a draft to be endorsed at the 2015 APFSD. This did not happen, but instead there were concerns voiced by governments who did not understand the need for a regional review process and feared that it could overlap with global review mechanisms. The Executive Secretary of ESCAP tried to alleviate tensions by pointing out that they were not creating a parallel process, but that there was a need for capacity building and technical support and cooperation projects. Governments were cautious and unwilling to endorse any regional mechanism with strong accountability; moreover, they did not want to preempt decisions under the GA at the regional level; and reminded ESCAP of the rules. This was an example of the international governance structures and advocates trying to widen their remit and the sovereigns holding against that. The 2030 Agenda that had been crafted at the global level now met with less willing reality at the regional level.

The road map derived from decisions of the Second and Third Asia-Pacific Forums on Sustainable Development and was finally agreed on during the 4th

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Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development and subsequently endorsed by the ESCAP Member States via Resolution 73/9, which had been adopted during ESCAP's 73th Commission Session. The road map identified priority areas of regional cooperation for implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The ESCAP conference structure and its ongoing activities, among others, would be "fully utilized in an effort to avoid duplication of work and increase efficiency" (ESCAP, 2017, para. 9).

The roadmap took a 'highlighting benefits' approach to taking action on achieving Agenda 2030 and focused on the possible benefits of data, finance, science-technology and innovation, north-south, south-south, international and regional partnerships and policy coherence. These areas of focus emphasized the regional level; it was only in financing and for policy coherence that a concrete role of national governments was recognised. ESCAP's own purpose, as regional level 'parliament' would be to facilitate capacity building and sharing of best practices in data, technology and innovation. These were advanced liberal and neoliberal forms of governing by 'nudging' and creating incentives rather than through other means.

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While dominated by the overall voluntary nature of the 2030 Agenda and its liberal and advanced liberal governmentalities, the roadmap also contained 'radical' elements. It proposed that inequalities and social protection should be studied to enable better policy advocacy. It also proposed that resource efficiency should be improved, to ensure a sound base for all economic and social activities. In this sense, a 'nested' or integrated view of the

environment/society/economy interplay was promoted with the recognition of systemic problems caused by prevalent economic growth patterns in the region. It also stated that trade was a key engine for growth and development but that its benefits had not been spread evenly, which was a mix of neoliberal and liberation rationalities.

Other forums reflected the rather uncritical embrace of the neoliberal approach to sustainable development. During a discussion on the SDGs at an International Forum on the Sustainable Asia-Pacific (ISAP) in Yokohama in 2015, an expert adviser to the Malaysian government opined that there was a need to link the discussion on the SDGs to economic development and poverty alleviation otherwise the SDGs would not resonate, and that the agenda needed to be framed around their economic benefits such as jobs and extra income. He also argued that the SDGs should not be viewed as a conservation agenda but rather as one about smart development.

But the more radical rationalities also figured in various fora that were observed during the research. At a meeting in Incheon, Korea in late 2015 at the UN Office for Sustainable Development (UNOSD), a participant pointed out the necessity to include concerns for drivers of political, social and cultural exclusion. He said this was necessary to avoid a 'side-lining' of the sustainable development by major impact events outside of the immediacy of the sustainability circuit such as inequality, immigration, global economic downturns or others. At a meeting organized by the Institute for Global Environmental Strategies (IGES) in Yokohama the following year, a UN official pointed out the need for

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transformation in economic models. The realization that economic growth alone was insufficient to deal with social and environmental challenges, and that there was a need for people centered development was emphasized. He also said that transformation in financing would be important, and that implementing the SDGs would not just rely on ODA but that it necessitated the transformation of rules and incentives governing financial markets, because current arrangements did not favor long-term investments. This comment illustrates that the risks of embracing market-oriented rationalities uncritically was recognised as risky, but that market-governmentalities should be relied upon, even in favoring more substantively liberation rationalities.

Another example criticizing the embrace of market governmentalities took place during the 2017 APFSD in Bangkok. There a Sri Lankan government delegate pointed out that if there was no transformation of existing trade, institutional, governance, or policy coherence structures then "the SDG bubble will burst in our faces in 2-3 years. SDGs are not about ticking boxes, it is about transformation, commitment and targeted action" (Researcher's observation, APFSD 2017). At the same event, a delegate from the Government of Fiji said about partnerships as a means of implementation, that they mostly were "…just on paper… there is a need for real and transformative partnerships. They need to be functional, transformative and proactive, country owned, held accountable." (Fiji). However, in the official track, while there were such occasions of experts and governments pointing out the 'elephants' in the room as barriers to transformative change, mostly the debates on sustainable development and the SDGs still continued to use market governmentalities, and treating the question

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of sustainable development as a rather apolitical and technical exercise. The CSOs, however, did not share this view.

4.4.2. Document Analysis: AP-RCEM 2014-2018

The statements and activities from AP-RCEM tended to highlight what the group considered neglected or breached commitments towards the 2030 Agenda and they pushed for inclusion of marginalized groups and neglected agenda points. In doing so, the AP-RCEM often exposed unspoken paradoxes, trade-offs and conflicts in the pursuit of sustainable development (see below for examples from the statements). This has revealed how they view sustainable development, for example, as not just a technical or managerial challenge, but a much more fundamental one based on tensions around justice and redistribution of wealth, and about humans.

The consistent push for 'Development Justice' and systemic barriers to the SDGs, increasingly entered the official UN track as later sections show, although to be sure it cannot be proven that the uptake of some 'structural barriers' and liberation type of discourse signifiers into the official process was due to AP-RCEM's work alone. Systemic barriers highlighted by the platform included "Dominant macroeconomic policies impeding realization of human rights, food security is problematic, trade investment creating challenges to development, healthcare/ education/water/housing/land access as well as SRHR and health care. Environmental degradation and climate change, discrimination and marginalisation based on class, patriarchy, sexuality, and age", as well as,

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"…religious fundamentalism, patriarchy, and corporate capture, land-grabbing, trade and investment" were highlighted (AP-RCEM Consolidated Statement APFSD, 2016).

The research then examined the types of government AP-RCEM called for to bring about 'Development Justice' to see whether they were notably different from what the 'official' SDGs track promoted and through that discern whether the CSOs brought 'radical' liberation governmentalities to the table or were simply co-opted by the dominant advanced liberal and neoliberal narrative. The next section presents a summary of key tenets of AP-RCEM's demands.

The research analyzed five consolidated statements of AP-RCEM that the platform prepared for the APFSDs between 2014-2018.[3] In that period AP-RCEM adopted several rationalities, sometimes contradictory, as a basis for their arguments to demand more ambition in governments' response to the SDGs. The most prominent rationality that underpinned all statements consistently derived from social and environmental justice discourses through AP-RCEM's Development Justice, under which they demanded five transformative shifts, "redistributive justice, economic justice, social, cultural and gender justice, ecological justice and accountability to the peoples" (Asia-Pacific Regional CSO Engagement Mechanism, 2017). However, there were also other rationalities and techniques showing that the group also called for tools and techniques of governing that were products of narratives and discourses that they were purportedly resisting. At a broader level, the intense and growing engagement

[3] The 2019 APFSD was also attended but only for informant interviews, and as part of the evaluation of AP-RCEM.

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with the regional and global SDGs processes itself showed recognition of the value of the advanced liberal system, which these processes are really based on. But when prompted about this, most AP-RCEM members (Chapter 5) would remain idealistic and argue that since their national governments were unsupportive of their causes, they had to resort to international processes and provide legitimacy to those through their 'authentic' engagement.

AP-RCEM 2014

In 2014, the goals had not yet been officially defined or agreed upon and there was still space to make recommendations and inputs into the SDGs process. Among others, AP-RCEM in its statement in Pattaya at the very first APFSD emphasized:

> To have a truly transformative impact, we must achieve development justice, which is based on five transformative shifts toward redistributive justice, economic justice, social and gender justice, ecological justice and accountability to the people.

While governments were familiar with these sub-sets of justice at the international arena, packaging them as 'Development Justice' was new. Development Justice was an important umbrella, and it subsequently proved roomy and accommodating enough in its vagueness to allow diverse groups affiliated with AP-RCEM to come together under a left-leaning 'movement', to accept the official process as worthy, but to add or emphasize elements they had perceived as lacking in the proposals for the Post-2015 Agenda. It was important to have this critique become part of the conversation to counteract what they perceived was an uncritical and non-precautionary embrace of market rationalities to deliver sustainable development objectives, but which in reality

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had marginalised and disenfranchised many (Personal communication, Bangkok, 2016):

> Economies must not be based on exploitation of people or natural resources or environmental destruction, but should instead work for people, rather than compel people to work for economies. We must reverse the destructive tide of privatization and concentration of wealth and resources to private corporations.

As techniques to 'reverse this destructive tide' AP-RCEM called for: international tax bodies, international financial transactions tax, special rapporteurs on sustainable development under the UN, regional and subregional peer-review mechanisms (Asia-Pacific Regional CSO Engagement Mechanism, 2014a, p. 7). These were not unheard of, and indeed had been recurring in calls from global NGOs in the run-up to Rio+20 and afterwards, so the people behind AP-RCEM continued that pressure from the regional level hoping that it would influence the global negotiations for the SDGs that were underway.

Looking at the excerpts above, the first one stated the objective of government and of economies to work for people and not the other way round, as a human-centered rationality countering a more neoliberal rationality that people should work for economies. The 'destructive tide of privatization' was problematized, but AP-RCEM's proposed approaches to deal with this 'tide' were based on international financial governance and trade structures; enacting and implementing pro-poor policies and to guarantee decent work and living wages; establishing universal social protection floors and access to affordable essential

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medicines, access to learning, and establishment of consumer protection systems. The techniques proposed would necessarily rely on policies, and governments' willingness to enact those policies. Thus, AP-RCEM proposed sovereign elements of government as solutions as well.

Table 8: Problems and Solutions in 2014

What is the problem (implicitly, why is it emerging)?	**How should the problem be governed/ solved?**
Militarization (structural barrier)	Redirect military spending for development
(Lack of) financing Illicit capital flows	Increased development assistance, progressive taxation, financial transaction taxes, debt cancellation and restructuring; Financial transaction taxes, *Eliminate tax havens*
Lack of corporate accountability	Strengthen corporate accountability and regulation
Lack of equal access to science and technology	Go beyond technology transfer to support and build local capacity and innovation, promote endogenous and traditional knowledge and technology; ensure access by marginalized groups; and overcome IPR barriers, especially on access to medicine.
Trade rules favour the powerful and exacerbates inequality and jeopardises sustainable development	Reform trade and investment rules to protect and promote local production and employment, especially of farmers, fishers and other small producers.

Table 8's quotes and excerpts from the consolidated AP-RCEM statement was a call for sovereign forms of government to counteract problems the AP-RCEM argued derived from neoliberalism. The mention of 'militarization' also showed the first glimpses of what would be emphasized consistently in the following years as 'structural barriers' to sustainable development. Along with the Development Justice framework, the structural barriers would form key tenets of AP-RCEM's 'liberation' governmentality. An overall analysis and discussion is elaborated in Chapter 5.

AP-RCEM 2015

The 2015 statement continued the previous year's emphasis on the need for 'Development Justice'. The main problems and proposed solutions were:

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Table 9: Problems and Solutions in 2015

What is the problem (implicitly, why is it emerging)?	How should the problem be governed/ solved?
The current emphasis on multi-stakeholder partnerships leans too much towards the private sector, which is disproportionately represented by transnational corporations.	A human rights-based approach to monitoring, including ensuring the participation of individuals and communities in monitoring … a mandatory, transparent and accountable reporting mechanism for all goals for the corporate sector … to ensure their respect for human rights.
Bilateral trade and investment agreements weaken multilateralism and moreover, is damaging to national sovereignty since corporations gain unparalleled power to sue national governments.	Financial Transaction Taxes and other innovative sources of financing such as carbon taxes should likewise be mobilized while military budgets should be cut down and reallocated to social spending.
Asia Pacific … characterized by growth on one hand, but widening inequalities in wealth, power and resources between and within countries, between rich and poor, and between men, women, LGBTIQ, across different age groups and disabilities, on the other. Widespread injustices are rooted in this system where only a few control wealth and power and thus dictate the rules of the game to favor their interests including the use of coercion, corruption, violence and war.	Governments should exercise the political will to raise public revenues by taxing corporations, assets of high net worth individuals and socially and environmentally harmful activities such as mining, financial speculation, and so on. We need Development Justice. Its overarching aim must be to ensure the wellbeing and dignity of all people without discrimination and without violating the integrity of nature.

Here partnerships were criticized as a vessel for corporatization, necessitating a return to greater emphasis in rights-based approaches to participation and partnerships. Taxes and budget redirections by governments should be undertaken to free-up funding for essential spending, rather than for military. Widening inequalities and capture of power by the 'few' were highlighted, a solution was proposed in an ideological return to 'Development Justice. The focus on rights was a left leaning liberation governmentality, but the focus on taxes and budgets a call to governments to strengthen their sovereign powers.

AP-RCEM 2016

In 2016, the narrative of Development Justice further elaborated their emphasis on the structural barriers to sustainable development. That year, the main problems and possible forms of government demanded by the group were:

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Table 10: Problems and Solutions in 2016

What is the problem (implicitly, why is it emerging)?	How should the problem be governed/ solved?
Structures of inequality and marginalization (i.e. caste, patriarchy, sexual orientation, ageism, racism, sexism, among others) remain deeply embedded in historical processes of discrimination	Addressing marginalization and discrimination requires the redistribution of power – economic, political, social and cultural power. Must have open and inclusive mechanisms for […] effective participation and representation in decision-making at all levels … dismantling the systems that concentrate power in the hands of a tiny minority of economic and political elites – a fact that is rarely acknowledged in this process.
The increasing number of laws and practices in the region that are limiting civil society space and impeding people's freedom of speech, expression, information and assembly	Decision-making on MOI and STI in particular at national, regional and global levels must give institutionalized space to civil society and the people who it is supposed to benefit.
The dominant macroeconomic policy regime in the Asia Pacific region has resulted in increasing privatization, liberalization and deregulation	Pro-poor and equitable economic and social policies must provide jobs, incomes and social provisioning, not based on exploitation but rather protection of all…
Extractive industries have destroyed natural ecosystems, displaced communities, undermined human rights, and contributed to health hazards.	…Requires a bottom-up approach with participation of grass-root communities and civil society, with shared ownership by the people.
Tax-generating opportunities are being thwarted by domination of global tax-cooperation mechanisms by a few countries. Critical areas such as health, education and agriculture are seeing budget cuts.	Regional cooperation to regulate the role of corporations, which operate across national boundaries, will also be crucial to avoid adverse impact on development goals.
Trade and investment agreements including the WTO and FTAs, have created major challenges for the developing and least developed countries in accessing land and resources, and challenged development policy space.	Trade and investment agreements negotiations must be transparent, participatory and subjected to independent human rights impact assessments before they are signed.
The promotion of public-private partnerships in the SDGs and the new urban agenda being facilitated by international financial institutions, especially through development assistance, translates to more debt, higher taxes, and further privatization and inaccessibility of urban infrastructures and basic social services including education, health and housing.	Addressing inequalities of wealth power and resources requires reorientation of economic, social and environmental policies. Social services and sustainable livelihoods must be ensured by governments. Decent work and living wages, as opposed to contractualization and the flexibilisation of labor, must be prioritized.
International cooperation has failed to yield adequate MOI in terms of promised ODA, fair rules of trade, adequate access to appropriate technology, ensuring development policy space, capacity building support and policy coherence. Experience also shows we cannot depend on private finance to deliver on the SDGs.	Financing strategies, including partnerships, must be oriented towards ensuring equity, and promoting human rights.

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AP-RCEM 2017

In 2017, the neoliberal trends that the mechanism argued to recognize as main challenge for implementation of the 2030 Agenda continued to be central in AP-RCEM's critique. It included emphasis on land grabbing, militarization and that

international conglomerates operating above the law, or according to a new ultraliberal rationality often caused the ills of underdevelopment, as quoted from the statement:

> Governments need to remember that facilitating environmentally sound and socially just development is their primary responsibility, not accommodating corporatization of governance and amassment of wealth by the few.

Similar to 2016, this year's statement also contained several paragraphs focused on trade agreements and specifically the problematic surrounding the investor-state dispute settlement (ISDS) mechanism, which is a part of international trade agreements, and which has been said to give companies the possibility to sue governments in those countries they have invested in, if the companies perceive governmental regulations are jeopardizing their profit. The main problems and proposed solutions in 2017 were:

Table 11: Problems and Solutions in 2017

What is the problem (implicitly, why is it emerging)?	**How should the problem be governed/ solved?**
Countries lose out on crucial revenue because of huge losses to illicit financial flows. …Presence of tax competition in the region, along with tax incentives that benefit large corporations, impedes the generation of adequate public domestic resources for investment in development.	Illicit financial flows require consolidated action and positions among countries in the region. The effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development require additional domestic resource mobilization, and progressive tax systems.
Women, older persons, human rights defenders, farmers, youth, indigenous peoples, trade unions, and environmental activists continue to be subjected to exclusion and criminalization and even violence and killings.	UN to ensure that there are international mechanisms to protect the rights and freedoms of all, especially vulnerable communities. Governments should confront politically sensitive topics such as human rights infringements; land grabbing, the concerns of and marginalized and stateless people.
Military spending of Asia Pacific countries in 2015 amounted to USD 1625 billion.	This huge budget can be re-allocated towards supporting sustainable development such as supporting small and indigenous farmers particularly in the indigenous peoples' territories, supporting climate adaptation for vulnerable groups, universal access to education and health, and so on.
CSOs still remain strongly concerned about the	Governments need to remember that

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system that allows a few elite to amass wealth at the expense of the wider population…this system is further promoted by the neoliberal economic order that dominates the Asia Pacific region and the world.	facilitating environmentally sound and socially just development is their primary responsibility, not accommodating corporatization of governance and amassment of wealth by the few.
ODA is also being leveraged to support private sector participation without accountability, oftentimes with sovereign guarantees, through Public-Private Partnerships that often facilitates human rights abuses; labor rights violations, land grabbing, and displacement.	ODA remains a major and crucial source for addressing systemic poverty and financing of the SDGs by 2030.
Development Justice is continuously being sidelined in the region because of the worsening systemic drivers of unsustainable development that remain unresolved: unjust free trade and investment agreements, land and resources grabs, militarism and conflict, increasing corporate power and greed, and patriarchy and fundamentalism.	In order to achieve health and well-being for all, address the social determinants of health and to put in place programmes and policies which effectively address structural issues e.g. big pharmaceutical's control over medicine patents, lack of financing, issues of availability, affordability and accessibility.
Economic, financial, and trade measures in conflict with Agenda 2030 are strongly being pursued in the region...further undermine redistributive justice in the region through provisions that will allow corporations to grab lands and other resources, control patents to medicines and seeds, and restrict access to services such as water, health, and education by making them only available to those who can pay.	Governments need to promote social and market entrepreneurship and enterprise development i.e. innovation and accountability, investments need to focus on livelihood creation such as green jobs. There is a need for better distribution of wealth and a more just sharing of the fruits of production through, among others, collective bargaining agreements, cooporativism and social enterprises.
Expansion of the corporate capture of development is being implemented through corporate partnerships with the UN, public private partnerships, and trade and investment agreements.	Governments must take necessary steps to institutionalize full and effective participation of small holder farmers, indigenous peoples, rural women in decision- making processes affecting them, including in the design, implementation, and monitoring of public programs on land and agriculture and even free trade and investment agreements, in accordance of the observation of communities' free prior and informed consent (FPIC).
	We demand the recognition of indigenous, traditional, and local knowledge systems as vital component of diverse sources of knowledge that serve as foundation of science, technology, and innovations (STI) necessary for the achievement of the SDGs.
	Comprehensive programs to encourage youth into agricultural and fishery profession to ensure rapid local growth, sustainable agriculture, and greater use of innovative technology to increase entrepreneurial and employment opportunities also need to be established. We strongly believe that protecting marine areas in Asia and the Pacific region will significantly contribute to the poverty reduction in region and can positively impact progress on a number of SDGs including SDGs 1,2,5,6,7,8,12, 13, 15, and 16. However, improving ocean health requires a strong

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	commitment from governments.
	We urge governments to...put in place enabling regulations to protect the right and access of fisher folks, coastal and rural communities towards marine resources. Institutionalise policy coherence at all levels that enable development justice that puts people first and conserves the environment and endangered species.

AP-RCEM 2018

"People are the real power behind the goals to achieve a sustainable and just future."

In 2018, the AP-RCEM annual peoples' forum held to build capacity of grassroots movements and to develop a common statement that speaks to (and critiques) the official APFSD changed name from CSO form to 'Peoples' Forum'. This change of name likely happened to allow the CSOs to assert their independence and freedom to choose how to engage on their own terms. They further translated the official UN call for participation into their own terms, which indicated that the agenda was taken on board but through exercising a certain freedom of articulation, related to the official process. Moreover, it indicated a widening of AP-RCEM's scope and reach as well as its increasing emphasis on solidarity and movement building, which was a growing area of focus of the platform.

The 2018 statement is structured according to the SDGs to be reviewed this year. Prior to this, it had a preamble and after the inputs on the specific SDGs, there were sections on integration, Means of Implementation (MOI), Technology, trade, CSO perspectives.

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Table 12: Problems and Solutions in 2018

What is the problem (implicitly, why is it emerging)?	How should the problem be governed/ solved?
Available laws are not enforced especially those related to human rights, involuntary resettlement policies, and rights-based housing. If they resist they are projected as anti- development.	We need urgent reinstatement and reclamation of the United Nations Declaration on the Right of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) not only in the SDG 15 but across the entire SDGs framework as without a resilient biosphere and the their guardians, one will not achieve the ambitious agenda of 'leaving no one behind'. Improve implementation of legislation by harmonizing laws and undertaking institutional reform; Respect and uphold human rights (including collective or community rights) of indigenous peoples over their lands, territories and resources. CSOs and governments together must spread more awareness about laws and rights of residents including legal aid, and jointly undertake urban studies on neighbourhoods, transform participatory planning principles into action planning level, and prompt local peer learning among local authorities. We must promote the ways in which people themselves are taking action, create paths for communities to become the leaders of implementation of SDGs, and finally ensure that SDGs are implemented in a positive manner. Harmonization between the International Human rights system and the Sustainable Development Goals will help ensure that SDG implementation is on track.
While countries in the region continue to have rapid economic growth; the region is being increasingly challenged by widening inequalities within and between countries, between rich and poor and between men and women, impacts of climate change, disasters, resource conflicts, human rights violations, shrinking democratic spaces, and lack of access to food, water, clean air, health care and other essential public services.	To enhance sustainable livelihoods, including through access to resources and ecosystem for all, in particular women and vulnerable groups ((ESCAP/RFSD/2018/INF/1)), there is a need to base it on ensuring the rights of women and other marginalized and vulnerable groups, including indigenous peoples, fisher folks, local communities, farmers are respected and recognized including their rights to their land, and territories and, including resources.
Over exploitation of fossil fuels, minerals, water due to profit driven production patterns are the root causes of enormous emissions and wastes, poor environmental health and the crisis of unsustainability. Increasingly, consumption based lifestyles are also exacerbating inequality and concentrating wealth and power in fewer hands. Continued investment in fossil fuels not only keeps scarce resources locked in decades, but also leads to serious adverse impacts on public health, environment, water, air, and land which runs contrary to SDG 7 and most of the other	Changing consumption patterns is not just through improving individual lifestyles but requires addressing structural root causes. Hold big transnational corporations accountable under the "polluter pays" principle for all their environmental crimes; The dominant discourse on energy transition needs to take the discussion beyond the narrow confines of renewable energy and energy efficiency and focus on the essential requirement of reducing energy use and fossil fuel extractions. Member states must ensure that energy

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SDGs. Continued investment in fossil fuels not only keeps scarce resources locked in decades, but also leads to serious adverse impacts on public health, environment, water, air, and land which runs contrary to SDG 7 and most of the other SDGs.	transition takes care of equitable access to energy not only for basic requirements but to enable productive uses of energy, energy democracy and energy justice and is not driven by big energy projects but also ensures small utility scale localized and sustainable energy alternatives
The SDG discussion has forced a shift to smaller partnerships mainly to justify a withdrawal of governments, primarily in developed countries, from contributing to the common financing needs of a global partnership for development with an overwhelming emphasis now on private sector financing. An increasing number of policies, programmes, and public private partnerships have not only reduced community control over these terrestrial land and resources but have led to financialisation and commodification of resources which runs at cross purposes with the SDGs. We also want to sound a caution on the ecosystem services approach, which tends to evaluate nature only on its economic benefits. This has huge adverse impacts on life, culture and traditions, sustenance, self-determination and well being of forest dwelling and forest dependent communities and several indigenous peoples. Even as we talk about strengthening partnerships with CSOs; more and more CSOs, women, human rights and environmental defenders face oppression, intimidation, threats and marginalization within and across the regions. Even as the spirit of the Agenda is leaving no one behind; seas of people in the region and across the world are being excluded and unheard. It seems there is a growing gap between aspiration and reality.	Regulatory, supervisory and accountability mechanisms and binding regulations founded on international human rights, labor and environmental standards therefore need to be strengthened and applied to all private sector actions. Community and social enterprises, which provide many best practices in this regard and offer much better solutions than profit-oriented corporations whose actions are most often damaging in the pursuit of sustainable development. Any public-private or public-public engagements need to include communities who are the guardians of natural resources and those whose lives and livelihoods depend on these resources of the forests which assume the central role in such engagements. Any such partnerships needs to stand on equal footing and should seek to mobilize financial resources and strengthen participatory conservation and regeneration of regulatory regimes on forests management. Rethink markets and consider people's right to a healthy and sustainable lifestyle away from waste-generating patterns of consumption; Hold big transnational corporations accountable under the "polluter pays" principle for all their environmental crimes; Improve the position of vulnerable people as actors, experts and leaders through implementing capacity development, vocational training and leadership training especially for women.
We see that billions of dollars are lost by countries such as China, India, Indonesia and others to Illicit Financial Flows (IFFs) due to tax evasion and cross-country transfers (transfer pricing) by corporations. This problem cannot be solved at national level and requires regional and global level cooperation on tax. However rule-making is still controlled by the OECD and remains out of control. Official Development Assistance (ODA) remains a critical source of financing …to be seen not as donation but rather the repayment of the former's historical and ecological debt to the latter.	Developed countries are called to meet their ODA commitments Calls for international cooperation on tax among countries as a solution. Calls for an 'SDG Compatibility Impact Assessment' of trade and investment agreements as component in a new global trade architecture. The discussions on a Regional Tax Forum seem to have got stalled. Given the huge loss to the region in terms of illicit financial flows, we call upon Member States to pursue this issue so that some form of regional cooperation can guarantee agreed norms to recover such potential revenues.
We also strongly resist false, untested and unreliable technologies and alternatives like geo-engineering and carbon dioxide removal	Both scientific and traditional knowledge and information platforms as well as other relevant tools should be utilized to better visualize the

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(CDR) which aim at "ever greening" fossil fuels and profits from it. The kind of STI solutions that are being promoted to deliver the SDGs have overwhelming focus on technological solutions and innovations that come from institutions/formal actors and business and pays lip service on the contribution and value of local technologies, community innovations and traditional knowledge.	environmental and social impacts of timber, non-timber and agricultural supply chains, especially with regard to deforestation and forest degradation. Such instruments and methodologies are critical for assisting governments and businesses with measuring progress on forest related SDGs. Encourage recognition and strengthening of traditional knowledge in policy-making and knowledge sharing and learning. We also want to see increased engagement on the part of governments… to initiate civil society-led participatory technology assessment platforms to interrogate new technologies and their potential impacts to peoples, livelihoods and the environment.

4.4.3. AP-RCEM's key messages

The key demands that seemed to recur in the years of analyzed statements are briefly summarized and discussed regarding their discourse adherence evident in the rationalities and mentalities of governing that were either opposed or proposed as solutions in the following sections.

Trade

While AP-RCEM identified trade as important potential MOI for the SDGs, they most often identified trade liberalisation as a systemic barrier. They described it as a product of neoliberalism, but also as a symptom of a power imbalance between developed and developing sovereign states, since powerful nations could exert more influence in trade negotiations than smaller and less powerful countries. AP-RCEM's solution to this problem, i.e., demanding reform of trade and investment rules to protect and promote local production and employment (AP-RCEM, 2014), and trade-union rights (2018) played into the globalized liberal reality of transboundary trade. In that sense the solution, whilst containing a liberation governmentality of greater equality among and between countries, acknowledged the importance of production, promotion and access to markets–which is of the greater neoliberal narrative. They also stated, that

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"Trade can act as a tool for garnering resources for financing sustainable development goals, but the current framework of trade agreements and policies can also act as a critical barrier to their implementation" (AP-RCEM Consolidated Statement, 2017). It is a liberal governance type of problem they proposed to be tackled through liberal types of governing (2016)–at the international levels and using international forums and management tools.

Financial architecture and financing

In 2014 they highlighted illicit financial flows as systemic barrier to be remedied by financial transaction taxes. Such taxes were proposed by the EU in 2012 and even by France at the SDGs Summit in New York in 2015 but had never gained enough traction to be implemented. Illicit financial flows are a result of globalization where international transactions remain beyond the reach of governments. The feasibility of financial transaction taxes depends on the will and action of sovereign governments as any such policy would have to be implemented by concerned national policies. But such an intervention is also liberal because it would depend on international cooperation. The objective of such a tax would be to spend it on financing the SDGs, thus, even if it is a sovereign tool acting in a liberal world, it's objective would be transformative. The calls for use of fiscal policy tools to gain financing for the SDGs are a notable break in consistency for the AP-RCEM, because fiscal policy tools are liberal techniques of governing, or what others have called ecological modernization (Mol, 2001). Such instruments employ pricing signals to steer behavior in a desired direction. At the same time, the calls for elimination of tax havens and illicit financial flows, strengthening corporate accountability are sovereign objectives of government, and in the AP-RCEM's views are necessary to counter

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the problem of rising inequalities. The CSOs state that the "…emphasis on multistakeholder partnerships leans too much towards the private sector" (AP-RCEM 2015), and that the transnationals are too strongly represented. As a solution, they call for stronger sovereign forms of government, requesting stronger taxation of corporations and assets of ultra-high net worth individuals, and socially and environmentally harmful activities (AP-RCEM, 2015). AP-RCEM perceives the lack of corporate accountability as a problem resulting from neoliberalism. To alleviate it, they call for a sovereign type of governing, i.e. regulations. While this may suffice for national level corporate accountability, multinational corporations transcend national boundaries, and therefore the proposal to strengthen regulation over corporates solely by means of sovereign types of governance may not be adequate but would require international cooperation. Problems and solutions are mismatched in this case.

Further on illicit financial flows the CSOs stated that this problem demanded concerted regional action by governments. Moreover, the financing gap faced by the SDGs should be tackled by increased domestic resource mobilization, and progressive taxation systems. At the same time they highlighted tax competition among countries, where some offer low or no taxes or grace periods for companies who are investing in the countries. They said that there was a lack of space to debate international taxation. It means international governance as spaces for debate and negotiation (presumably under the UN) should be created to debate international financing issues (AP-RCEM, 2017). The problems but also solutions in terms of governing then both fell into a liberal category because of the calls for fiscal policy tools, regional concerted action; and then by

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governments which hinted at a combination requiring stronger sovereign type of government.

A problem related to the neoliberalisation of the global economy, according to the AP-RCEM, is the promotion of bilateral trade and investment agreements in the region. These "weaken multilateralism and damage national sovereignty, since corporations gain unparalleled power to sue national governments". To govern this trend and to avoid these negative ramifications, it states that all regional trade and investment agreements "need to be subjected to independent human rights impact assessments" (AP-RCEM, 2015). This is a liberation form of government that calls for action by the UN Human Rights Commission or other bodies that are mandated to ensure human rights internationally.

In the same vein, the AP-RCEM pointed out that ODA was often used to leverage private sector involvement but lacked accountability; moreover, it stated that ODA remained an important source of financing for development and reminded donor countries of the old (but non-fulfilled) pledge of 0.7% ODA of GDP, which only a handful of countries in northern Europe ever fulfilled (AP-RCEM, 2017). Problems and solutions were a mix of sovereign government (lack of commitment to fulfill ODA requirements and a call for renewed commitment), as well as advanced liberal international forms of governance under the auspices of the UN. The North-South dichotomy also reared its head when ODA commitments were raised. This was a direct sovereign government type of problem indicating the power imbalance between developing and developed nations.

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Structural, or systemic barriers

The AP-RCEM consistently highlighted systemic barriers to sustainable development. For the platform, these barriers included militarism and repression, resource and land grabbing, patriarchy and fundamentalism, inequality, human rights (violations), and corporatization of the agenda (AP-RCEM 2014-2018).

The increasing militarization (2017-2018) in the region is a sovereign concern, as military is an expression of raw sovereign power and depends on national government policy to increase (or decrease) military spending. The solution, or the way to govern this through redirecting this spending to development, as the CSOs proposed, would equally have to be a sovereign decision. The problem is of course thornier than this, since in some countries large firms within the military institutional apparatus often have significant lobbying power to ensure that military budgets are growing rather than shrinking or being redirected towards sustainable development. It means that military spending is viewed as a sovereign and neoliberal problem with a sovereign solution.

Land grabbing (2016, 2017, 2018) was emphasized as a result of lacking accountability of public-private partnerships (PPPs) and corporations and governments performed the land grabbing. Here, the perpetrators forcefully evicted often already poor farmers and indigenous people in the 'name of development' to access land and resources. The people that gave rise to this systemic barrier in AP-RCEM's statements were really grassroot representatives, with stories of unlawful evictions of indigenous people in the Pacific Islands,

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which made for a harrowing and convincing performance at the People's Forum in 2017.

Patriarchy and fundamentalism (2015, 2017, 2018) came from the strongly represented women's groups that formed a significant backbone of the AP-RCEM (and that also hosted the AP-RCEM secretariat between 2014-2019). As such the statements singled out this systemic barrier several times but failed to ascribe a clear reason for its existence. Mainly the problem was one of power inequalities, often harming those that were already marginalised in the 'global south', people with disabilities, LGBTIQs, migrants (and migrant workers) or others already marginalised. The notion of patriarchy and fundamentalism then took character less as a binary women/man problem but rather one of unequal power relations resulting in abuses of different kinds. The statements highlighted global norms and rights and demands and asked to end these forms of inequality. As such, the statements highlighted liberation forms of governmentality but also sovereign powers such as discriminatory laws as both culprit and possible remedy.

Inequality and human rights (violations) (2014-2018) were closely associated with patriarchy and fundamentalism and an effect of the latter. The AP_RCEM highlighted inequalities as structural problems embedded in the region's history, which were exacerbated by growth focused development and of neoliberal trade agreements, the fruits of which benefitted only the few. The AP-RCEM did not recommend solutions but the persistent calls in international fora like APFSD indicate that perhaps many felt that the liberal system was the only platform where such concerns could be voiced.

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The AP-RCEM's statements between 2014-2018 mentioned corporatisation of the agenda 59 times - in various connections such as corporate control of food production, lack of corporate sector accountability, human rights violations and environmental destructive practices by large corporations, concentration of wealth and resources to private corporations, lack of accountability of transnational corporations and many others. The main problem was the underlying neoliberal capture of development, economies and societies in the region and the remedy, apart from drawing attention to this elephant in the room was to call for stronger sovereign laws and regulations (and their implementation) by governments, as well as stronger international frameworks to address this growing problem.

When asked why such a focus on structural barriers, members of the platform thought systemic issues were not sufficiently addressed in the global and regional SDG processes because they reveal the inherent political aspects of sustainable development that often remain un-named in international diplomacy. However, AP-RCEM consistently pointed out these 'barriers to development justice' (People's Forum, 2017), as elephants in the room often focusing on the redistributional aspects necessary for sustainable development. AP-RCEM's appeal to governments and the UN to address these issues falls across several governmentalities but would best be classified as part of the liberation governmentality, which the AP-RCEM consistently returned to, in order to create a conversation about these issues that are important to the CSOs, in their role as opposing the 'mainstream' tackling of sustainability issues.

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Participation and Partnerships

AP-RCEM consistently lamented that the space for CSOs to become engaged was shrinking (2015-2017) and highlighted the importance of ensuring CSO participation in the SDGs in various places over time. But in fact, the experience at the regional and global levels was not so grave (see Table 5, page 58 on participation over time). Some observers from the donor community commented during an informal conversation (Singapore 2019) that this point should be developed further and underpinned by data since the AP-RCEM always appeared to participate in great numbers, at least at regional meetings and that therefore it seemed like an unjust (or at least unclear) claim. The most directly relevant solution was proposed to the adoption of "…a human rights-based approach to monitoring including ensuring the participation of individuals and communities in monitoring and evaluation […] and a mandatory, transparent and accountable reporting mechanism for all goals for the corporate sector…"(AP-RCEM, 2015). These are liberation types of approaches although the question of corporate accountability remains open.

At the same time, they noted the trend of shrinking civil society space that characterizes many countries across the Asia-Pacific region and which came about almost as a reaction to the inclusiveness of the SDGs processes at global levels in late 2015 and early 2016. The solutions, in their view, needed to be based on "targeted and measurable action plans to meet [marginalized peoples'] specific needs and wellbeing; and by establishing open and inclusive mechanisms for their effective participation and representation in decision-making at all levels. It means dismantling the systems that concentrate power in the hands of a tiny minority of economic and political elites–a fact that is rarely

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acknowledged in this process" (AP-RCEM, 2016). Again, this was a liberation governmentality to bring the voices of the marginalized to the table, as the AP-RCEM had worked on doing since the beginning of the platform's existence. It was also calling for action plans, and mechanisms for decision making which are ways of governing that are indirect and advanced liberal that can have steering effects but which are by no means binding in any sense.

As for partnerships with businesses, the counter narrative to the neoliberal trend consistently figured strongly in AP-RCEM's consolidated statements. In 2018, the group stated that the focus on partnerships as a means of implementation would move responsibilities and financing requirements from the public and into private hands. They argued that this was a risk and mentioned the negative impacts of commodification and finanicialization of natural resources and were critical of the 'ecosystems value' approach, stating that it valued nature only for its economic benefits and failed to account for other benefits of a healthy nature to humans. This was a critique of the neo-liberal rationality that unduly empowers the private sector in development without setting up adequate checks-and-balances. As remedy the AP-RCEM proposed regulatory, supervisory and accountability mechanisms and binding regulations founded on international human rights, labor and environmental standards … applied to all private sector actions" (AP-RCEM 2018, p. 11); as well as tools from Agenda 21 (Polluter Pays principle) to "…hold big transnational corporations accountable…for all their environmental crimes". They also proposed to promote social and community enterprises, if at all the business sector should be involved in implementing the SDGs and requested for community involvement in all

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development activities. AP-RCEM also called for improving the position of vulnerable people using untapped potentials in that part of the population as "…actors, experts and leaders through implementing capacity development, vocational training and leadership training especially for women" (AP-RCEM, 2018, p.3). The types of government to solve problems caused by a rampant private sector were based on liberation rationalities but suggested liberal tools also (Polluter Pays) that use the market to dis-incentivise pollution. Moreover, the calls for recognizing different parts of the population as leaders and experts were a call to give them more power to help implement the agenda. The recognition of expert power was a liberal governmentality, which had for long been broadly used and promoted in the UN.

Technology

With regards to technology, AP-RCEM proposed to solve the problem of lacking access to science and technology by extending not just technology transfer between countries (a sovereign decision), but to combine it with building the adequate capacity and at the same time create space for local innovation and traditional knowledge to play a greater role to enable marginalized people to enter into the discussion on technology and benefit from it. As referenced earlier, SDG related meetings and international sustainable development processes often produced this kind of solution. Enhancing the capacity of those who did not possess it was an example of a liberation type of governmentality that could benefit those who were in weak positions in society. It derived from the ecological modernization narrative or discourse due to the experience in some advanced nations that access to the right science and technology could solve problems of unsustainability. Such calls for technology and appeals to allow

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farmers to partake in the economy in references from the farmers constituency, who called upon governments to "…guarantee the rights of smallholder farmers, small fishing-folk, indigenous peoples, and women to have access to, control over and ownership of fisheries, property, productive resources, information, and appropriate and environmentally sound technology" (Consolidated Statement, AP-RCEM, 2014). These demands were not radical but adhered to the traditional development discourse based on market rationalities, where lesser abled groups partake in economic exchanges provided they have access to information, technology, land, and markets.

AP-RCEM also resisted unproven and risky technologies including geo-engineering and carbon dioxide removal. These technologies did not address the structural problems emphasized as root causes of unsustainable development. Moreover, the types of science, technology and innovation (STI) promoted to help deliver the SDGs were criticized to derive from high-tech and ignore the value of local technologies, community innovations and traditional knowledge. In a similar vein to the critique the solution calls for "civil society-led participatory technology assessment platforms to interrogate new technologies and their potential impacts to peoples, livelihoods and the environment" (AP-RCEM, Consolidated Statement, 2018, p. 13). Along with calls for greater participation of CSOs, the solutions proposed here were liberation forms of government based on local empowerment and engagement.

The chapter described the emergence and inception of the SDGs from Rio+20 and the OWG processes culminating in Agenda 2015. It showed how the official

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global track promoted use of advanced liberal and neoliberal rationalities and techniques of governing. The chapter then described the uptake of the SDGs at the Asia-Pacific region level, and described the emergence of the AP-RCEM, its structure, mission and focus. It also drew out key tenets of AP-RCEM demands between 2014 and 2018 and discussed how these were most often calling for stronger sovereign forms of power to counteract the neoliberal narrative. In some cases, however, the AP-RCEM also adopted and promoted advanced liberal techniques, wherefore one could ponder if the platform by its sheer existence and statements ended up legitimizing through its authentic grassroot voice, the narrative they set out to oppose. But, engagement is never black and white, and people of AP-RCEM found several valid reasons to participate in international processes. The next chapter discusses the impacts and effects of CSO engagement with the SDGs at a broader and more reflexive level to cast light on how such engagement was developing in the researched period of time.

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Chapter 5: Analysis and Discussion

5.1. Main Discourses Contesting Within the SDGs

The following section discusses the different discourses, identified by their rationalities and techniques of governing as they emerged from the research. The sections of this chapter draw from the data that Chapter 4 presented. Although no discourses exist as prototypes but in a continuum (Fletcher, 2010, 2017), the sections are divided according to their focus on primary discursive elements of governing to explain the findings in the material. This material derived from the global and regional processes between Rio+20, the emergence of the SDGs, and their subsequent regional negotiations on implementation in the Asia-Pacific region by UN and the AP-RCEM non-state CSO platform.

Based on interviews and personal communication with AP-RCEM informants, this chapter also provides more detailed information on how AP-RCEM's engagement was governed, including the groups' interactions among themselves and with the UN. This is to show how that as the AP-RCEM's liberation form of power grew to become officially more recognised, there were certain rules and practices that governed these interactions, which indicates that the 'radical' voices also play by the rules of the official processes and thereby contribute to the legitimacy of existing power structures.

5.1.1. Reaffirming the Importance of Sovereign Power for SDGs

The UN facilitated the OWG process to define the SDGs on behalf the UN member states, and therefore Agenda 2030 needed to reiterate the central role of national governments. While other actors and rationalities were also reflected in the

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agenda and in discussions around its implementation, a defining feature of the processes was the reaffirmation of the significance of sovereign powers in the international system of the UN.

The SDGs were based on an intergovernmental process–the OWG. The reliance on an open, intergovernmental structure to define, discuss and agree on the SDGs came from Rio+20, which mandated "an inclusive and transparent intergovernmental process on sustainable development goals that is open to all stakeholders, with a view to developing global sustainable development goals to be agreed by the General Assembly" (United Nations, 2012, para. 248). The intergovernmental nature of this process notably set the SDGs apart from previous 'governance-by-goals' exercises (Biermann et al., 2017). The MDGs for instance had been formulated by an exclusive and closed-door expert committee (Hulme, 2010; Vandemoortele, 2011). Similar to the MDGs, the more recent *High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda* had been appointed in 2010 to define the 'post-MDG era' by the UN Secretary General. The choice of eminent persons did not emerge from an intergovernmental process. The panel produced a report in late 2013 that proposed a set of goals for post-2015 (High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, 2013), but its recommendations were largely ignored in favor of the more democratic intergovernmental process to define the SDGs (Browne, 2017; Elder & Olsen, 2019). With that, it became clear that the SDGs reflected a change in the development narrative–in what appeared to be a leveling of the playing field that recognised all countries equally and allowed for a contestation among different types of power. It also highlighted

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one important aspect of neoliberal governmentality, namely the 'responsibilisation of the subject' (Soneryd & Uggla, 2015).

The reiteration of governments' sovereign power as an important driving force for sustainable development challenged the influence appointed experts had otherwise enjoyed in the field of development and sustainability, which some argue has grown to the detriment of processes designed to accommodate democratic and grassroot voices and create stakeholder ownership (Winkler & Dubash, 2016). To be sure, contesting expert domination did not miraculously democratize the playing field but rather opened up spaces for contestation between other actors. But the contest changed the playing field and is a significant event as the liberal system under the UN entered a new stage. As other researchers have pointed out, "liberalism sanctions the continual questioning of governance and its effects. This becomes an increasingly pronounced characteristic under advanced liberalism." (Brown, 2014).

While adherence to the power of expertise became contested through the structure of the OWG, it did make ample use of experts throughout its sessions to inform members of the OWG on the issues at stake (Researcher's observations from IRF Ch. 4). It was not as if the OWG CO-Chairs had suddenly let a purely political process gain political legitimacy but emerging with an agenda uninformed by science. The point is rather that the importance of governments and those processes which *primarily* governments were privy to, increased in importance compared to processes that had previously determined development agendas and which were perhaps less balanced due to the influence of a few

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northern experts and governments rather than a universal and politically more legitimate process such as the OWG. In a sense we could view this as a re-empowerment of governments, especially those from developing countries that had otherwise been at the receiving end of the donor agendas of the past with little say in how agendas had been formed. In that sense, the inclusiveness of the SDG formulation process was inclusive in the sense that it not only drew positions and inputs from non-state actors but also from the sovereign powers at large, those who anyway were to formulate and implement policies in pursuit of the SDGs.

The reaffirmation of the importance of the sovereign in the orchestration of the SDGs was also recognizable in key outcomes around that time, including the Rio+20 Outcome, as well as in the 2030 Agenda. Rio+20's *The Future We Want,* which as Chapter 4 recounted above, contained plentiful affirmations of sovereign powers and techniques of governing such as democracy; environmental protection (by law); territorial integrity and independence; the specificity of each country's development challenge; the legitimacy of countries' sovereign rights to decide on their own approaches to operationalize sustainable development (or ignore the call altogether); enabling frameworks created by governments; social protection systems; to keep any suggested interventions in line with national policies, legislation, rules and regulations; promotion of incentives and removal of disincentives to energy efficiency; elimination of fisheries subsidies; development and enforcement of local waste management policies, strategies, laws and regulations; countries' sovereign right to develop their mineral resources; but at the same time emphasizing the importance of

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legal and regulatory frameworks for the mining sector, stated to prevent illegal financial flows from mining activities (See Annex 1). With regards to the envisioned SDGs, progress on the implementation of any such goals should…not be applied in a one-size fits all way, but needed to take into account different national realities, capacities and levels of development, respecting national policies and priorities (United Nations, 2012, para. 247).

Agenda 2030 similarly emphasized respecting national policies and priorities (§5); respecting national policy space (§21); importance of national ownership (§46); taking into account national realities…and that that governments set their own national targets (§55); measurement of poverty according to national definitions (SDG 1.2); nationally appropriate social protection systems (SDG 1.3); women's empowerment in accordance with national laws (SDG 5.a); and many other examples in SDGs 9.2; 12.7; 12.c; 14.5; 16.10; 17.18; § 63; §66; §74.a, h; §76 and §79.

Reaffirming the importance of governments and the intergovernmental process is significant. This is not because expert knowledge fell short or was ignored, but because expert knowledge is rarely sanctioned by governments, and its influence is based on appointments rather than democratic selection or election, and often the expert is white, male and from the global north, a remnant from colonial times (Ziai, 2016). In that way, excessive reliance on expert knowledge risks harming the accountability of the UN and its universal ideal, which was also a core principle behind the SDGs.

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As for the experts, the problem behind knowing the right answers but losing credibility was also recognised by experts themselves. One participant in a panel that in late 2018 stated "people feel left out when global elites talk about sustainability in a vacuum without roots to reality", and "expert knowledge seems to polarize instead of democratize spaces" (Researcher's observation UNOSD meeting, Korea 2018). It is fair to say that the reliance on northern-generated expert knowledge has driven sustainable development into somewhat of a credibility crisis. At a very broad level, this is reflected in the doubt that a part of the general population has in the natural sciences and their proof of anthropogenic climate change, threatening the relevance among not only sovereign power but also that of public support at large of core issues, which the SDGs represent. This trend, although seemingly foreseen by the inclusive intergovernmental process of the OWG is still very much an influencing factor in the sustainable development field and remains to be addressed through other means than just reiterating the primary importance of national sovereignty for governing sustainable development agendas. For example, and as subsequent sections show further below in this chapter, CSOs have recognised this and emphasized authenticity through reflecting 'people power' and grassroot concerns to counterweight expert-driven processes under the UN and bring 'southern voices' to a center stage that wants to be much more 'inclusive' (AP-RCEM, 2018). As Chapter 4 showed, the CSOs did not just capitalize on the legitimacy provided to them through their strong performance of grass-root and peoples' power, they also recognised the importance of expert knowledge. They also recognised that their participation as grassroots and representatives of such constituencies legitimized the UN itself as important facilitator of authentic

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voices in the space of the SDGs. This tension between performing authenticity and bringing in technical knowledge even exists within the CSO groups as some identify more as grassroots whereas other CSOs are in fact subject matter experts on areas such as indigenous peoples, science and technology and so on (Personal communication, Bangkok 2019). Those with the most expert power still have more influence than the authenticity provided by representing the voices of those left behind. Nonetheless, the notion of expert power became contested with the SDGs. We can view this as a contesting of the advanced liberal governmentality, based on its lack of democratic legitimacy.

The central position of sovereign powers in the SDGs also implied another change in the development discourse, namely a move from a north-south to global and universal (Fukuda-Parr & McNeill, 2019; Ziai, 2016). We recall that the process that created the SDGs differed from the MDG process. The latter had not been global but merely a northern agenda for the south, or "…our agenda for them" (Saith & Ashwani, 2006, p. 1184). In that perspective, the SDGs challenged the development narrative as something the 'north' was doing to the 'south' by creating a universal and globally agreed agenda. The agenda also emphasized the importance of respecting countries' 'policy space'. All of these efforts paid off in creating ownership over a shared and universal development agenda among all countries no matter their level of development.

Creating a (more) level development agenda would also influence the previously mentioned notions of 'donor-recipient' relationships. For example, TFWW declared that each country should be responsible for its own economic and social

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development, and that the role of national policies and domestic resources and development strategies could not be overstated (United Nations, 2012, para. 252). The empowerment of the national as primary owner of an agenda facilitated a break from the north-south donor/recipient development agenda of the past but also indicated a gradual pullback of responsibilities from rich northern countries to help less-developed countries with development. Instead, the onus of implementing the SDGs had become 'each to their own' type of responsibility, which was a strengthening of sovereign powers at the cost of the multilateral system. At the same time, the importance of 'international cooperation' remained emphasized. The nature of such international and multistakeholder cooperation and 'level playing field' though could all too willingly be filled by a privatization of development without accountability and a strengthening of the neoliberal, which was what the AP-RCEM emphasized as a risk to the agenda's implementation. Unfortunately the financing process for the SDGs, which culminated in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda in 2015, illustrated exactly this fear, that no new financing commitments were made, and that the mainstay of development should be facilitated by a host of non-binding partnerships and technology facilitation (Montes, 2016).

This change from traditional development discourse to a global voluntary agenda also meant that donor countries could downplay the significance of ODA, saying that relying only on ODA for delivery of the SDGs would perpetuate the north-south divide and would thus be counterproductive to a universal and global agenda. We can read this in several ways. For one, it had been argued that international development aid would never suffice to pay for the SDGs, since

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some sources identify an 'investment gap' of between $2-3 trillion per year (Blended Finance Taskforce, 2017) and that other sources of 'Innovative Financing' would be required. The funding issue allowed focus on the role of the private sector through initiatives such as 'blended financing' or emphasis on 'aid for trade', which were also mentioned (Researcher's observation, New York IRF retreat, 2014), and thus further pushed the agenda in a neoliberal direction, away from government-to-government towards essentially reflecting the greater narrative of economic and financial globalization and limited governmental capacity caused by austerity measures in the wake of the last global financial crisis.

It means that while the change in the development discourse towards more horizontal and universal architecture had provided more voice for national governments in developing countries, it also came to empower global financial and business sectors and continued the narrative of 'marketization of development' (Wanner, 2015). Striking a balance between sovereign powers and neoliberal global governmentality would then seem difficult, especially in countries that are budget and/or capacity constrained and unlikely to sufficiently check private sector encroachment into what was supposed to be sustainable development.

This trend of growing neoliberalisation serves as a link back to the dissertation's main theoretical and analytical framework of governmentality. In fact, Foucault had recognised the gradual and intensifying embrace of liberal and neoliberal forms of governing that had begun to enter the 'art' of government already in the

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1970s when he conducted his lectures on biopower and governmentality (Michel Foucault, 2008). Prior to that, his focus had been on more traditional forms of power and their expression, as evident in his treatises on pastoralism and discipline (M Foucault, 1977; Gordon, 1991), as two older forms of power.

Linking back to the observed (apparent) reconfirmation of sovereign powers, Foucault has argued precisely that other less central forms of governing had come to *supplement* (not replace) more traditional forms of government. In the world of policy this trend had been evident since the inroads of economic and financial globalization took hold with Reagan and Thatcher's embrace of the neoliberal move towards deregulation in the 1980s (Kendall, 2003; Klein, 2014). This decentralization narrative was global and became reflected also in the development and sustainable development arenas, for the former through the dominance of the Bretton Woods' Washington Consensus, or in the more recent MDGs - both of which skewed the world in favor of northern countries' but often at the detriment of developing countries' governments' who had to restructure to receive development aid.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that the 'flattening' of the development agenda to become a global undertaking did not mean by any account that the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda at once replaced the north-south donor agenda and its legacies. Especially smaller and less developed countries continued the role of the 'southern recipient country'. For example, a Cambodian participant had admitted at a workshop in Korea in 2016 that the country's MDG experience made it well situated for the SDGs; as they "needed to go along with the global agenda for

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interests of donor money" (Researcher's observation, UNOSD meeting, Korea 2016). This shows how the traditional north-south discourse and its power relationship co-exists with the newer neoliberal conception of sustainable development where each country is on its own, and the different forms of government exist as continuum that allows for contestation and protest to enter, as the case of the AP-RCEM showed.

There were many such examples of combinations of discourses. For instance, in the Rio+20 outcome document the support for "national regulatory and policy frameworks that enable business and industry to advance sustainable development initiatives" (United Nations, 2012, para. 46) was stated. In that sense, the importance of national rule of law was primarily aimed at neoliberal ends, namely to ensure a framework to allow the private sector to contribute to sustainable development objectives. As a whole, this is a neoliberal technique of governing, which recognizes the enabling role of sovereign powers to give or take the space for private sector contributions. The rationality is accommodative in that its ideal end point is sustainable development. But in reality often the business interests of profit take the lead (Tulloch & Neilson, 2014; Wanner, 2015).

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5.1.2. Neoliberal Elements in the SDGs

As the section above indicated, the research found that despite the role of national governments had been reemphasized in their formulation and implementation; the SDGs in fact embody and promote advanced liberal and neoliberal governmentalities. At the highest level, this is recognizable in the architecture of the 2030 Agenda, i.e. to 'govern-by-goals', a technique of

governing that has been characterized as neoliberal (Death & Gabay, 2015; Kumi, Arhin, & Yeboah, 2014). Goals govern indirectly by setting a standard with an end-goal to create a competitive environment for countries and stakeholders to pursue, and where the regular voluntary reviews and reporting at the global level create a kind of soft steering, or self-governing effect. In the governmentality literature this has been called 'conduct-of-conduct' (Joseph, 2009) whereby individuals, organizations, and governments tend to support actions in a certain direction through different techniques of governing that rely on indirect, rather than direct sanctions and power (Dean, 2017). It means that from the point of view of the goals, the stakeholders and governments become and object of governing, but since they're doing it on their own they are also becoming subjects to the SDGs.

Foucault had also found that the neoliberalisation of governing had been underway for decades, and was by some identified as a definitional element in the concept of sustainable development right from the start (Dasgupta, 2011). But exactly how this would be reflected in the 'transformational SDGs' was yet not clear.

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Apart from, at least at the political level, reaffirming the importance of the sovereign, the SD outcome documents also used advanced liberal rationalities and techniques of governing. Rio+20's TFWW and Agenda 2030 contained various references to the importance of collection, analysis and use of (gender) disaggregated data–qualified according to national circumstances and capacities (See Chapter 4). Much like the MDGs, the global set of SDGs indicators also

became criticized for undertaking political prioritization in its choices of methodologies and data (Elder & Olsen, 2019). In addition, the indirect governing through generation of focus on specific types of data and knowledges is an example of advanced liberal governing. These knowledges then influence prioritization of development policies, depending on what is being measured and what types of data are funded (Fukuda-Parr & Yamin, 2013).

At Rio+20, much of the focus was on soft, non-binding agreements, and encouraging "responsible business practices, such as those promoted by UN Global Compact" (United Nations, 2012, para. 46). Advanced liberal and neoliberal rationalities and techniques figured strongly in the outcome document. One notable example was sustainable consumption and production (SCP), which was an initiative started by the UN and reaffirmed in the Rio+20 outcome. However, beginning with its terminology focusing on consumption and production, SCP embodies economic rationality and implies the importance of producers and consumers in that regard. More pointedly the neoliberal narrative was further reproduced in the SCP goal (SDG 12) when later on the goal's name was changed from sustainable to *responsible* consumption and production. Where the term *sustainable* may be defined and defended against science, the term *responsible* individualizes responsibility, and leaves it up to the adopting country, actor group or individual to define the levels of responsibility of consumption and production against a qualitative variable.

More directly liberal and neoliberal rationalities and techniques in TFWW included references to sustainable management of natural resources; the entire

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focus on a green economy as one of the main themes of the Rio+20 conference was telling even though it was promoted in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication as one of the important tools available for achieving sustainable development. Further the document stated that "a green economy could provide options for policymaking but should not be a rigid set of rules" (United Nations, 2012, para. 56), to accommodate the earlier quoted critique voiced by some middle-income countries that northern countries should not impose a green economy as a conditionality of donor support. Moreover, the tensions between sovereign and neoliberal forms of government were further elaborated in the statement "that a mix of measures, including regulatory, voluntary and others applied at the national level and consistent with obligations under international agreements, could promote green economy" (United Nations, 2012, para. 63); or that governments should "create enabling environments that facilitate public and private sector investment in relevant and needed cleaner energy technologies" (United Nations, 2012, para. 127).

Further neoliberal elements were found in the calls for partnerships as important vessels for implementation, promoted by the UN since Johannesburg in 2002, with requirements for broad and voluntary alliances between people, governments, civil society and the private sector (United Nations, 2012, para. 13), but lacking details regarding the accountability of such alliances. Instead, sustainable development should be attained through cooperation in forms of "sharing of best practices and experiences" (para. 85 (i)); voluntary sharing (para. 114)…and…exchange of information…and lessons leaned" (para. 76 (f)); environmental awareness (United Nations, 2012, para. 130). In that way, the

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global sustainable development process and its outcome documents promoted sustainable development within the current framework of global liberal capitalism, shying away from calling out any of the systemic barriers and contradictions to sustainability of the liberalized global economy.

These examples are all approaches of a neoliberal governmentality that by increasing knowledge of the subject encourages self-government of a certain objective rather than calling for sovereign government intervention, much like Agrawal's example of *environmentality* (Agrawal, 2005), of which TFWW contained a clear example in the commitment "to improving the livelihoods of people and communities by creating the conditions needed for them *to sustainably manage forests*"(United Nations, 2012, para 193) (italics added). At the same time, this promotion of governmentality approaches in the sustainable development agenda recognised the importance of certain sovereign government interventions, such as "promoting secure land tenure, particularly decision-making and benefit-sharing" (United Nations, 2012, para 193) to enable the effective delegation of ecosystems management to the people and communities in question.

For Agenda 2030, the continuation of this approach was also evident in the agenda's emphasis on the importance of trade as "engine for development" (United Nations, 2015, para. 62), and urging states to liberalize trade by not promulgating or applying "any unilateral economic, financial or trade measures"; or "the call to correcting and preventing "…trade restrictions and distortions in world agricultural markets, including through the parallel elimination of all

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forms of agricultural export subsidies and all export measures with equivalent effect (United Nations General Assembly, 2015a, para. 20 and SDG 2.b).

Neoliberal governmentalities also shone through in many other areas of Agenda 2030. For example, in calling for sustainable *management* (italics added) of natural resources through conservation (para. 33) This view also permeated several other places in the Agenda, including in SDG 6, SDG 12.2; 14.6 and 15.2, that promoted a management approach ahead of binding regulations or other types of governing. As for ODA, the document stressed that it should "be used to catalyze additional resource mobilization from other sources, public and private" (United Nations, 2015, para. 43). This shows the promotion of a sovereign technique of governing but it was based on a neoliberal rationality of using public ODA to facilitate private investments.

Other examples of overt neoliberal approaches to governing include the focus on implementing investment promotion regimes in LDCs (SDG 17.5); integrating ecosystem and biodiversity values into national policy frameworks (SDG 15.9); promoting aid-for-trade (SDG 8.A); enhancing global partnership for sustainable development (as vehicle for implementation); that "…international trade is an engine for inclusive economic growth and poverty reduction, and contributes to the promotion of sustainable development" (United Nations 2015, para 68); and that "domestic resources are first and foremost generated by economic growth, supported by an enabling environment at all levels" (para. 66). At the level of financing the importance to "rationalize inefficient fossil-fuel subsidies that encourage wasteful consumption by removing market distortions" (SDG 12.c)

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was stressed. As other research has pointed out (Elder & Olsen, 2019), the terms 'inefficient' and 'market distortions' did not capture the more ambitious calls for stronger taxation to help the environment that had otherwise circulated in the OWG process, but rather echoed a play to anticipate any negative effects on the market caused by taxation measures, and the 'inefficient' use of resources, which implies that the level of efficiency may well be a subjective judgment against economic factors of efficiency.

Agenda 2030 also emphasized that "national development efforts need to be supported by an enabling international economic environment, including coherent and mutually supporting world trade, monetary and financial systems, and strengthened and enhanced global economic governance" (para. 63). On the surface this refers to engaging the globalized capitalist system, but the term policy coherence also implies that the 'external' global capitalist system should become more in line with the tenets of the SDGs. We can recognize a similar emphasis in the call to "improve the regulation and monitoring of global financial markets and institutions and strengthen the implementation of such regulations" (SDG 10.5); or in the affirmation of the "…great importance to providing trade-related capacity-building for developing countries" (para. 68), which shows allegiance to the current system of international trade thereby not addressing structural elements that hinder sustainable development, but acknowledging that able southern governments would benefit from engaging in international trade. It was truly a balancing act of different governmentalities, indicating that sustainable development as it had originally been conceived, as an ideal compromise between economic growth and conservation remained largely the

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same, even in the SDGs although the discourse moved away from north-south relations toward a more level 'development project'.

And what is more vulnerable to attack by the radical advocates such as the AP-RCEM goes back to earlier critique of the concept essentially ironing over the inherent conflicts and trade-offs between environmental sustainability and economic development (Dasgupta, 2011). The 2030 Agenda in several places noted that "sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth is essential for prosperity. But then affirmed that it would, "…only be possible if wealth is shared and income inequality is addressed" (United Nations, 2015, para. 27). This was an attempt at balancing the growth narrative with an indirect call for addressing structural issues such as those that produce inequality. It became clear that in facilitating the creation of Agenda 2030, the UN was not just a facilitator but also a norm-setter that reinforced advanced liberal values and also promoted more ambitious rationalities at the same time, as a delicate balancing act (Elder & Olsen, 2019; Fukuda-Parr & Hulme, 2011). The following section provides examples of such more ambitious rationalities and techniques resulting from the document analysis in Chapter 4.

5.1.3. Ambitious and Radical Liberation Elements in the SDGs

The forms of power and government in Agenda 2030 were a mix and a mosaic of different rationalities. As previous sections showed, sovereign power was often used to enable advanced liberal and neoliberal forms of governing to grow in dominance in the sustainable development agenda, which the CSO group contested and adopted in various ways. Sovereign and advanced liberal forms of power were not the only ones that mixed and matched in the Agenda; but liberal

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indirect governmentalities also helped empower different segments of society, such as women, forest communities and the marginalized. This indicated that there had been attempts to reconcile the move towards embracing the private sector with increased inclusion of these traditionally disadvantaged groups in society. After all, the vision was that everyone should embrace sustainable development and take action, but those who are not disadvantaged would be the least likely to demand radical change; that demand should come from elsewhere and was represented by what Fletcher (2010, 2017) has called liberation governmentality. As Chapter 2 alluded to, such governmentality challenges the top-down managerial ways of decision shaping and decision-making and is based on self-organized, flexible, and bottom-up initiatives that focus on environmental or social justice, whilst adopting non-negotiables from different existing regimes.

Examples of this most radical form of power both in TFWW and in Agenda 2030 included references to freedom, peace, security, human rights, rule of law (although sovereign here); gender equality, the empowerment of women, the rights of youth, elderly and disabled, migrants, and others to enjoy the benefits of development. A new rationality entered this discourse, signified by the 'right to development' (United Nations, 2015, paras 10 and 33) or right to food, safe drinking water, education and others. There was also the 'full realization of the right of self determination of peoples' (para 16); 'dignity and equality (preamble)'; 'rights of nature' (United Nations, 2012, para 35) and others as well as repeated references to the full and effective participation by developing countries in global decision-making and in the global trade architecture (United Nations, 2015). These references together signified a counterweight to the

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neoliberal narrative that was otherwise also supported as the previous sections showed. At the same time, often these ambitious text pieces used qualifiers that weakened their messages, these include 'as appropriate'; or 'encourage'. It also used the term 'promote', which signifies a market-based rationality, rather than linking it with sovereign law and legislation that arguably could have been more effective in guaranteeing these ambitious human and natural rights, than vague endorsements and promotions.

The section has shown that Agenda 2030 contained mixtures of discourses and associated rationalities. The roots of these discourses and rationalities were discussed in Chapter 2. The next sections show how the Asia-Pacific region embraced the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda, and especially how the AP-RCEM CSO platform interpreted, resisted and navigated the official SDG space to influence it.

5.2. The Asia-Pacific Regional Response

The regional UN response followed the narrative that had been established in the wake of the original UN Earth Summit and slightly amended by the Rio+20 Outcome with a regular annual Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD). The APFSD was an annual forum for regional Follow-up and Review (FUR) of countries' performance on the SDGs, reflecting decisions on the High Level Political Forum (HLPF) at the global level, including also the modalities for CSO participation.

AP-RCEM benefitted from the momentum created by the SDG process, where calls for inclusive, integrated, and transformative goals provided inspiration to think of new ways for civil society to engage (United Nations, 2014; United

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Nations General Assembly, 2015a). In particular, the engagement was founded on the UN General Assembly Resolution 67/290 on the format and organizational arrangements for the HLPF (United Nations General Assembly, 2013). While retaining the intergovernmental character of the HLPF, the Resolution stipulated that representatives of the major groups and other relevant stakeholders were allowed:

a) To attend all official meetings of the forum;
b) To have access to all official information and documents;
c) To intervene in official meetings;
d) To submit documents and present written and oral contributions;
e) To make recommendations;
f) To organize side events and round tables, in cooperation with Member States and the Secretariat.

With the trend for greater inclusiveness stipulated in various official UN documents, and the detailed provisions for engagement in the above UN Resolution, the AP-RCEM understood to take advantage of the space to rally their causes, linking them to the SDGs' broad and accommodating framework to amplify voices, create solidarity, and gradually become a power "too large to ignore" (Personal communication, Singapore, 2019), although actual impacts could have been hampered by the lack of regional integration specifically for the Asia-Pacific region.

As it is, the regional level doesn't have any sovereign qualities, as the Asia-Pacific is a geographically, culturally and economically a very diverse region. While the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia-Pacific (ESCAP) is the regional UN

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arm of the global secretariat in New York, there is (as in New York) no real appetite and no political mandate for accountability mechanisms regarding voluntary development goals like the SDGs. But the region's governments do assemble regularly at the APFSDs to discuss and promote aspects that fall under the broad umbrella of the SDGs. ESCAP had also tried to increase ambitions by drafting a regional roadmap on implementation hoping that it would garner some level of commitment and quasi-accountability. However, at the time of the research there was little, if any, appetite for any strong regional effort at oversight for countries' actions on SDG implementation at the regional level. The next section discusses the regional roadmap.

5.2.1. The UN Economic and Social Commission's Roadmap

Supported by the AP-RCEM in several statements leading up to its drafting, the UN Asia-Pacific regional commission produced a *Regional Roadmap for Implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific* (ESCAP, 2017). This roadmap identified priority areas for regional cooperation, but not all the region's member states called for it. Some had questioned the purpose of this document and had opposed it on grounds of lacking consultations when it was first tabled at the 2016 APFSD. Governments (mainly Japan) had argued that they had already agreed to a global FUR process and were skeptical of any regional effort and its potential for overlap and demand for additional funds. They felt the Secretariat had overstepped its mandate and had become too prescriptive towards member states and reminded ESCAP of its purpose to serve member states and not the other way round

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(Researcher's observations, APFSD, 2016). As a result, the UN secretariat conducted more careful consultations on the draft, and tabled the document again a year later, at APFSD 2017, where it was finally approved and subsequently endorsed at the ESCAP's annual Commission Session (via Resolution 73/9), which functions as the regional decision making mechanism.

The overstepping of boundaries is one symptom, which has been alluded to earlier, where there are 'norm entrepreneurs' (Fukuda-Parr & Hulme, 2011) within the UN who are ambitious and want to see stronger commitments, but doing so is clearly a balancing act - and the roadmap example indicates a point where this balance was overstepped. As a result, the Executive Secretary also underlined in the introductory paragraphs of the roadmap that review of its implementation would "…not create additional reporting requirements for member States and will be conducted within existing resources" (ESCAP, 2017, para. 39). For governments this admission basically immediately weakened the political punch of the document, when there would not be any additional accountability related to it, what would such a roadmap actually be able to achieve? As it stands, the roadmap referred to the importance of the "…effectiveness of national mechanisms upon which the ultimate success of the global 2030 Agenda rests" (ESCAP, 2017 p.4) and thus reinforced the importance of national sovereign power similarly to what the analysis had found in the global SDGs process.

At the same time, the usual liberal rationalities abounded such as the importance of regional economic cooperation and integration, connectivity, and that trade

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had “considerable potential to boost implementation of SDGs”…and that the roadmap had identified areas of work that could “tackle obstacles and create opportunities” (ESCAP, 2017, p. 5). ESCAP then promoted and emphasized its own expertise and importance of ‘regional’ and international forms of governing to the benefit of countries in the region, among others by setting itself up as a main body facilitating important areas like “data and statistics, technology, finance, policy coherence and partnerships” (ESCAP 2017, p.4). Rather directly, the services of the Secretariat were promoted by stating that the secretariat would “...strengthen support to Member States in their efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda in an integrated approach, inter alia, with analytical products, technical services and capacity-building initiatives through knowledge-sharing products and platforms (ESCAP, 2000, p. 5), with a smaller emphasis on national government responses through the example of domestic resource mobilization (ESCAP, 2017, p.11).

This promotion of services to support Agenda 2030, apart from being techniques of advanced liberal governmentality, carved out the position of the UN secretariat. The UN regional commissions’ relevance has been questioned by some (Browne & Weiss, 2013), and the importance of their existence has to be reiterated by carving out roles and functions in the UN system, such as to “…mobilise support from other sources, agencies, funds and programmes” (ESCAP, 2017, para. 35 b). The latter meant that the Secretariat, which was not an implementing organ of the UN, and which often has very limited funds to work directly with member states would instead take on a facilitating role as intermediary with other UN funds and programs. Such attempt for dominance

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within the structure of the regional UN bodies is reminiscent of the 'Delivering as One' initiative (United Nations, 2006), which was set in motion by former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan to create greater coherence among the vast number of overlapping and opaque UN initiatives and work programs. While theoretically a valuable attempt at increasing integration among different strands of work, the coordination creates a competition among agencies and programs about who is to coordinate whom – not unlike a competition for mandate and funding – i.e. operational and political power. Not unlike national governments in the intergovernmental arena, agencies and governments alike are often unwilling to be coordinated by others, and the otherwise useful attempt at streamlining and increasing integration falls short of its intentions.

Going back to the case of the regional roadmap, ESCAP promotes advanced liberal governmentalities and proposes itself as clearinghouse for such governmentalities. They are not of great consequence; as governments had ensured that any agreement on a roadmap would not entail additional funds or reporting requirements. In that sense, one may ask what the UN serves here when it has such limited influence, and at the same time it shows the power of expertise still lies with the UN and the international development actors, some of which are severely funding constrained and instead try to carve out spaces that are based on the power of knowledge and expertise such as offering analytical products that often conclude with a demand for the services they themselves are offering to gain competitiveness in the development 'market place'.

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At the same time as the above is very much a part of contemporary UN approaches to governing through knowledge, expertise and information rather than through any other techniques. The roadmap did contain ambitious and radical elements, which may have been due to the supportive statements by the AP-RCEM in favor of the roadmap, since the CSOs had recognised that this document would be the only real accountability instrument at the regional level (Personal communication, Bangkok, 2019). Of course member states could ignore any of the more ambitious or radical elements, but the language consistent with liberation rationalities was there mixed with the economic growth language. It mentioned policy coherence as one important factor for successfully implementing the SDGs but did so in the context of the need to sustain growth and enhance resilience and as requiring regional cooperation to overcome 'first mover' risk in terms of 'short term economic competitiveness' (ESCAP, 2017, p.12). The roadmap also highlighted social issues in the region such as ageing, migration, disabilities, gender equality and women's empowerment, and that inequalities and social protection should be studied to enable better policy advocacy (ESCAP, 2017, p.13). It also recognized systemic issues and that the focus on economic growth had produced unwanted dis-benefits, but proposing only soft solutions like resource efficiency, that hardly anyone could disagree with. This was a mix of liberation rationalities linked with advanced liberal ones that reinforced both the political role and functions of the commission together with neoliberal rationalities of competitiveness. Together these reinforced the current focus on economic growth rather than propose a transformation away from it.

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Other systemic and thematic issues in the roadmap included the importance of women's empowerment, financial inclusion, and 'leaving no-one-behind' (ESCAP, 2017, p.11). But solutions were mostly only soft and avoided addressing any root causes. Observations and conversations with UN staff over the course of this research showed that the inherent structural problems with current economic growth models have been recognised, but that the UN itself remains constrained in its advocacy since promoting more radical changes goes beyond their mandate and that efforts, such as the Regional Roadmap were critiqued, watered down or shut down by national governments when they perceived that the UN had gone too far in setting norms. In this perspective, given governments' often rather limited appetite to strengthen regional governance (i.e. Japan's reservations on the roadmap or countries critique when it was presented in 2016 see Ch. 4), ESCAP resorted to promoting soft approaches and offered its own in-house expertise such as capacity building as well as proposing technology facilitation and exchange between countries.

5.2.2. Governmentalities Generally Promoted in the Region

Not just ESCAP's roadmap, but observations at other events also underlined how it was common to argue that taking action on the 2030 agenda should be framed as an opportunity rather than as a cost. As a person during the International Sustainability Forum Asia-Pacific (ISAP) in Japan in 2015 had admitted, "…if we implement the SDGs it is not just about costs but also about a lot of savings that can be made. This can be a politically salient point." Governing by creating buy-in to get people to act in their own self-interest is characteristic of advanced-liberal forms of government, i.e., to argue for the importance of taking action as an economically sensible rather than moral question. In the same context, another

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participant had pointed out that outreach and linking SDGs issues to the population was crucial, since the SDGs would have to be owned broadly in society to make a difference. The intention was that ownership would allow people to identify, rally for the SDGs, and maybe even act more sustainably in their own self-interest. Similarly, a UNDP participant at the same meeting had pointed out that the sense of ownership and empowerment that is created through the openness and inclusiveness of the SDGs agenda is a powerful tool. "If you have access, you will feel you have a stake". This technique of governing, while decidedly advanced liberal does not necessarily lead to liberal or neoliberal outcomes, as more radical groups and platforms, such as the AP-RCEM also took a strong ownership of the process, but used it to meet their own ends of promoting development justice and bringing grassroot voices to the SDG negotiations.

While ownership has been emphasized as an important technique of advanced liberal governing (Rose, 2004), several events that had been observed over the course of this research seemed to indicate that small groups were still talking amongst themselves, but failing to really address the actors that may be responsible for lack of progress towards sustainability. For example, expert meetings and forums rarely point out systemic and political hindrances to sustainable development. Instead, the often highlighted governance techniques and rationalities emphasize integration, partnerships, capacity, technology, and mainly view the implementation challenge as a matter of getting the right technological fix (Researcher's observations, 2014). Surely technologies, 'good governance', and 'ecological modernization' narratives have been important

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ingredients to achieve progress on the SDGs, but if that were all, then the SDGs would already be on track. This realization is increasingly entering the expert discussions, however. At the Sustainable Development Transition Forum (SDTF) in Korea in October 2018, one participant stated in a panel, "people feel left out when global elite talks about SD without roots to reality" (Researcher's observation, 2018). Another participant at the same meeting from Africa relatedly pointed out that country reporting at the HLPF was just a show-off or a tourism promotion exercise; that it was just window dressing and a beauty contest; and that no decisions are made and that lack of action was never accounted for. He lamented that no journalists are interested in this and that for the matter of prolonged relevance of the sustainable development agenda the lack of engaging *the real barriers to the SDGs should be seriously considered* (emphasis added).

This epistemic 'siloization' where experts in one field fail to sufficiently include 'outside' perspectives was also expressed from the perspective of CSOs. At the 'Jump Starting the SDGs Conference' in Berlin in 2016 for example, a CSO speaker noted that CSOs most often only are invited to join expert or governmental panels, where the optics need to be good; and that governments in some cases also use lack of coordination to lock CSOs out (Researcher's observation, Berlin, 2016). The CSOs know this and some are getting tired of being invited to 'shows' that have little impact or significance outside of the conference rooms (Personal communication, Singapore, 2019).

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The next section discusses the contributions from the AP-RCEM to show how CSO participation has evolved with Agenda 2030.

5.2.3. How is the AP-RCEM Different?

The development justice framework along with the thematic working groups of the AP-RCEM and its unique ability to co-create 'consolidated' statements that 18+5 constituencies have agreed on and used to create their own subsequent inputs and statements has had a positive effect on the ability of different constituency representatives to make inputs in an integrated manner (Personal communication, Singapore 2019). This means that AP-RCEM's inputs were rarely sectoral but recognised the interconnections between themes and goals. The participatory modality of creating consolidated statements during the 3–day 'Peoples' Forums' which usually preceded official events (such as the APFSDs, UNEA or others) enabled APRCEM members and affiliates who worked on different issues to recognize the connections that their issues have to other development issues and thus enabled them to take an integrated approach in their statements. However, it was not clear whether the increased realization of interlinkages between respective constituency issues also impacted AP-RCEM members' respective work at national and subnational levels or whether this was just figuring in the language of the analyzed consolidated AP-RCEM statements at regional level. But, the aim was: "to create a "platform to gather, discuss, think and introduce our ideas and demands to others, and to learn from each other", with the aim of "strengthening solidarity; building movements; increasing CSO *engagement*; and realigning (possibly redefining) development priorities and agenda, at various levels" (Personal communication, Singapore, 2019).

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Taking such an integrated approach seemed to have been helpful in allowing AP-RCEM to contest and protest elements in and beyond the SDGs, which they perceived as systemic or structural barriers to sustainable development. The AP-RCEM consolidated and thematic statements did not always bring these barriers forward with equal weighing, i.e. some figured more strongly than others, but AP-RCEM has emphasized them consistently throughout their engagement, has lent the AP-RCEM platform a somewhat radical identity that some disliked but which the UN in the region has largely been supportive of, due to the necessity to point out issues with development which the official process often has failed to consider adequately (Personal communication, Bangkok 2019), and which other actors may not have been free to voice directly. In that sense, the DJ framework and AP-RCEM's ability to take integrated approaches and name structural barriers seems to have created a powerful platform with strong messages that the official process appreciated, even if some have perceived the messages as uncomfortable by some (Personal communication, Bangkok 2019).

That the AP-RCEM was aware of its 'radical' identify and took advantage of it was evident in its annual Peoples' Forum. The three-day forum often began with marginalized peoples representatives who told their stories about the shadow side of development which rarely make it to the UN or figure in government statements. In the past, these stories have for included first-person accounts on for example migrant labor in Hong Kong (2015 and 2016); indigenous peoples' forced eviction by mining companies in Solomon Islands (2017) or urban poor and their lack of land-rights and adequate housing in the Philippines (2018), or the struggle of environmental defenders in South Thailand (2018). These

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authentic accounts stood as sobering counterpoints to the preceding opening statements made by UN representatives and set the mood for the large Peoples' Forum to craft strong statements based on development justice. That way the CSOs created a regional solidarity among marginalised and grassroots people that permeated the different statements that AP-RCEM brought to the official SDG process.

But the focus on justice and DJ in particular also turned off some large and well-established CSO 'players' in the region, including the South Asian Third World Network and Ibon International from the Philippines. The latter organization's leader withdrew its direct involvement with AP-RCEM but delegated AP-RCEM work to more junior staff. According to informant interviews (Personal communication, Singapore, 2019) this was because the DJ framework was perceived as neo-Marxist, and those CSO and NGO groups whose existence hinged on their service delivery to governments and international organizations stayed away from what they considered too radical. Some of those today remain skeptical such as the Asian Development Alliance (ADA), and the Global Call to Action Against Poverty (GCAP), who are acknowledging the space the AP-RCEM has created but shy away from direct involvement. That is likely because the political (Marxist and liberation types of rationalities) messaging of AP-RCEM is unsuitable for their own work, which is more geared towards a less radical service delivery to support the international system. At the same time, however, these more service delivery oriented networks and INGOs criticize AP-RCEM for being exclusive (Personal communication, Singapore and Tokyo 2019), which more recently prompted ESCAP to reach out to AP-RCEM to try to create a better

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relationship between these different types of engagement mechanisms and networks, so that ESCAP's own credibility regarding whom and how they engage with CSOs is not compromised.

The reluctance of some groups to associate with the development justice framework may also have to do with how it emerged. The development justice framework was one person's creation (name known to researcher) and was not articulated through a democratic process, which is in some ways ironic given AP-RCEM's staunch support of democratic processes. Meanwhile, the person who coined this framework left AP-RCEM, but she had been part of the core group creating and defining the platform in the period 2012-13, after the Rio+20 conference. When challenged on the development justice framework during an interview in 2015, she had argued that it was important to resist playing into the official structure, i.e. the proposed SDGs, and that developing a justice framework made it useable as non-negotiable strongpoint for engagement and for pointing out the injustices of development (Personal communication, Bangkok, 2015).

This focus on justice, and on systemic barriers to development gained widespread support among those CSO groups that joined AP-RCEM as many felt this was a good segue way helping them to bring attention to a number of perceived injustices and political aspects of sustainable development that the official process had tended to omit. The term 'development justice' gradually had come to be reflected in intergovernmental outcomes of the APFSD, as shown below. In that sense, the framework facilitates the subjectivities of people who are victims of 'injustices' and also stands for a field of visibility that draws

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attention to those who are left behind creating a form of liberation governmentality that the official SDG process could not ignore or perhaps has benefited from.

5.3. AP-RCEM's Engagement

The previous section provided a summary AP-RCEM's activities and its growing significance at the regional level, including also the types of power, which the AP-RCEM has promoted, resisted and embraced in its statements. The next sections provide information regarding the effects and impacts of AP-RCEM's work based on what AP-RCEM respondents and their partners have considered impactful.

Data for the sections below derived, in part, from an evaluation, which took place in in 2018 and 2019. The Asia-Pacific Forum for Women, Law, and Development (APWLD), which had hosted the AP-RCEM Secretariat since 2014, and ESCAP commissioned and funded the evaluation. The researcher was engaged as advisor in this task, although several interviews were also carried out by the researcher that brought more details to this research, especially regarding RQ4 on how AP-RCEM, by proxy through the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda, has impacted CSO engagement with the SDGs in the region.

5.3.1 Getting Your Language In

The research examined the extent to which key elements or major themes of Development Justice were reflected in APFSD chair's summary and in ESCAP's regional roadmap. In particular, it looked for the transformative elements in DJ that challenged the dominant framework of (neoliberal) development. These

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transformative elements were identified in AP-RCEM's consolidated statements in previous section and pertained to:

- Calls for redistribution to address inequality to address extreme wealth and 'leaving no-one behind'
- Prioritizing human rights over profit and market rationalities
- Respecting planetary boundaries and just transition to sustainable development
- Reaffirmation of peoples' power, empowerment and solidarity

Language of AP-RCEM's consolidated statements did end up in the official outcome documents. Examples were found, and included:

Table 13: AP-RCEM's Messages as Reflected in APFSD Summaries

Key AP-RCEM Theme	Key AP-RCEM Issue (Consolidated Statement)	Mention in APFSD Chair's Summary
Trade	• Trade and investment agreements relation to SD; lacking accountability • Investor-State Dispute Settlement (ISDS) • Trade furthering neolib. ideology	• Trade mentioned 45 times between 2014-2018. But hardly ever in any radical or transformational sense. • Was mentioned in relation to trade-union rights (2018); • Reflected CSO message on reform of trade, financial and monetary structures, or in calls for SD impact assessments of trade, accountability and reporting mechanisms for financial trade institutions (2014); • Human rights impact assessments of trade (2015) • Fair rules (2016); • ISDS (2018) • Stronger recognition of trade as MOI in the regional roadmap (2017)
Financial architecture and financing	• Regressive/progressive tax systems • Regional tax body • Illicit financial flows • Financial transaction taxes • Military spending	• Progressive taxation and financial transaction taxes (2014) • Reform of public finance and taxation system (2017); • Keep public sector central to financing of the agenda (2014) • Regional tax body (2017) • Illicit flows (2018) • Financial transaction taxes (2014) • Military spending (2015, 2017)

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Structural, or systemic barriers	• Militarism/ repression • Resource and land grabbing • Patriarchy and fundamentalism • Inequality • Human Rights (violations) • Corporatization of the agenda	• Shifting from palliatives to addressing structural causes (2014) • Structural barriers to access HIV and AIDS services (2014) • Structural drivers of inequality (2018) • Removal of structural barriers and the promotion of human rights (2018) • Systemic barriers (2014); systemic challenges (2017), and issues (2017) • Land-grabbing (2015 and 2017) • Human rights strengthening (2014, 2015, 2016, 2018); Corporate consolidation of power (2018) • Concerns regarding inequality (2014, 2018)
Participation and partnerships	• Shrinking democratic/ CSO spaces/ restrictive laws and regulations on NGOs • The perils of public-private partnerships as well as blended finance	• Ensuring participation as set forward in HLPF (2016), indivisibility of human rights and participation (2018), protection of human rights and development justice in all partnerships (2018); integrating commitments to human rights in partnerships (2018), partnerships should be equitable (2014); concern regarding the promotion of public-private partnerships at the expense of public interest (2016); partnerships with business should benefit workers (2018) • Shrinking civil society space would prevent successful implementation of the Goals (2017)
Technology	• Digital technology and the fourth industrial revolution impact on rights, privacy, policy space	• Technology alone should not be regarded as solution and required community involvement (2014, 2016); technology in context of human rights (2016); S&T should be part of global commons (2016)

Source: AP-RCEM External Evaluation (Forthcoming).

In addition to AP-RCEM's core issues, which influenced the language in the official APFSD outcomes, these outcome documents also referenced AP-RCEM's core framework 'Development Justice'. It appeared 10 times in APFSD reports between 2014 and 2018, and justice in general was mentioned 27 times. But as it is, the status of the APFSD outcome document was a 'Chair's Summary" or a "report". None of these were negotiated or binding documents and their force therefore questionable. They merely reflected the state of the agenda with no guarantee that AP-RCEM's inputs have any significant effect on how the SDGs would be prioritized in the region. In addition to the effects on the formal

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process and spaces created by AP-RCEM at the annual APFSDs, the presence of strong CSOs at the regional level also helped lend legitimacy to the official process, as one AP-RCEM member commented: "*they* [the UN] *need us more than we need them. We bring the authentic voices [we] show that this agenda takes the voices of the marginalised seriously and leaves no-one behind"* (Personal communication, Tokyo 2019). In that sense, the AP-RCEM legitimized the regional level processes and strengthened the regional scale, which is an advanced liberal imagined community. Other impacts emerged from peoples' participation more informally.

5.3.2. Impacts Beyond the Regional Level

While influencing and adding language was a tangible impact, AP-RCEM's achievements inspired beyond the conference rooms. For example, CSOs in other regions, perceived the AP-RCEM as a large, inclusive and coordinated platform, unconstrained by silos, able to amplify the voices of underrepresented constituencies, and consistently expresses a strong call to challenge the current development paradigm and push for development justice (Evaluation, Forthcoming). Additionally, in 2018, the AP-RCEM became the first regional stakeholder platform officially included in the Steering Group of the global Coordination Mechanism for Major Group and Other Stakeholders in the HLPF (Personal communication, Skype, April 2019). This expanded AP-RCEM's opportunities to build relations and solidarity with CSOs and social movements beyond just the Asia-Pacific region.

During an interview in early 2019, one of the APCREM co-chairs shared with the researcher that African, and European regions now had their own 'CSO

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Engagement Mechanisms' modeled on AP-RCEM's TOR and structure. As she shared in her own words (Personal communication, Skype 2019):

> I remember back in 2014 when we established AP-RCEM it was recognised as best practices for CSOs, and it was included in the UN-MG system. In 2015 UNDESA invited us to explain how AP-RCEM works, and we emphasized that we have one consolidated position and work as one unit. At the global level it was not like that before. The different constituency groups worked alone with minimum coordination. When we presented that we need more than 9 MGs and recognize subregions and try to create thematic WGs it was adopted by them and they established the HLPF coordination mechanism which looks almost what APCRCEM is doing, where they recognize the regions not only the constituencies and are working in thematic groups. So it is really recognised and copied. It has also resulted in copies in ECE regional commission and I can say it is truly adopting AP-RCEM, which is based on our TOR, although they don't have a political unity. But they now recognize 14 MGs. They're trying to work together just like what we are doing now. According to [person name] she says the one thing that is still hard for ECE RCEM to take on is how we are trying to have a quota, for example we're trying to have more grassroots and national organizations rather than big INGOs, in Europe these are still already dominating and don't want to lose their space, while we in AP-RCEM we are quite strict about it on really giving a chance to grassroot and peoples movements who cannot come to New York at least be at the regional level. We now know also that the ECA (AFRICA) are going to have their own ECA RCEM. It is amazing that our AP-RCEM's

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> work has been adopted. But I don't know whether it is initiated by CSOs because the discussion is mostly coming from UNDESA. They are asking for us to share lessons learned, any tips or tricks to make it work. So at least UNDESA felt it important to have regional mechanisms, so I want to see it that way. But of course for us we have been hammering that we had initiated RCEM ourselves and that it didn't come top down as in these examples. So [one can reflect and think that] once it gets attention it gets grabbed and copied from top down. But the value is supposed to come from the regions not from the top. But of course each region [is different]. For example Latin America has tried, but it hasn't worked because of the big dynamics inside CSOs themselves so it has not worked, so sometimes top down leadership is important to instigate discussions. It is not so important who initiates it, but who really controls and 'runs the show'.

As the above excerpt shows, AP-RCEM had impacts in terms of how specifically grassroots CSO engagement came to be understood and organized, and, perhaps more importantly for narratives and governmentalities - how the regional level was represented in other regions, as well as at the global HLPF level. But as per the comment above, the other regional responses from Europe, Africa, and Latin America were mostly orchestrated from UNDESA in New York, which initiated responses based on AP-RCEM's structure in other global regions, and those regions were still dominated by established larger INGOs. In that sense, AP-RCEM's existence helped strengthen international governance at regional levels, and this supported the legitimacy of regional UN institutions by adding authenticity that only grassroots CSO platforms could bring to the fore.

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Interviews and conversations that were part of the evaluation of AP-RCEM as well as a 2-day Strategic Planning meeting that the researcher participated in in March 2019 in Bangkok also revealed impacts back on national levels. For instance, there were also some AP-RCEM constituents from Vietnam, Indonesia, and the Philippines that, based on their experiences at regional intergovernmental meetings, came to interface more with their national governments. For example, the Philippine AP-RCEM focal point for Social Enterprises shared that the engagement at regional levels through AP-RCEM had benefits for national follow up: "Once we meet governments at intergovernmental level or event we can always go back to them in the capital; so this engagement opens the door wider for us. For example, NEDA [National Economic and Development Authority] invited us to their activities in the Philippines and we can input our agenda. Or, if we need speakers from their office we can request. Inclusion of social entrepreneurship in Philippine development plan is one significant impact, [which was] achieved by our [AP-RCEM's] collaboration at global and regional levels with the government so they became familiar with us. NEDA provides the overarching blueprint of development in the Philippines; and we are captured there. You need to know your delegate and then follow-up in country, build relationships" (Interview, Singapore January 2019).

On the other hand, however, someone who worked on environmental justice told a very different story from the same country. She said, "We meet the Philippine delegation at the international meetings (Department of Environment, or NEDA) and establish relationships. But when we go back, it's still the same; the doors

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are closed. So the influence at national level is very little" (Personal communication, Singapore January 2019). Another conversation with a person from Sri Lanka, who was on the AP-RCEM Advisory Group (AG) made similar observations:

> The development justice and radical content of AP-RCEM has taught me a lot. But I have the sneaky feeling that it has negatively affected my ability to work locally because we question things. It has created a fear that we go and say negative things in the local government, so I am facing a battle with the national government…they are trying to kick us out of a project, which we co-designed, so my knowledge technically seems to have improved. They don't like that we are involved in regional spaces, they don't like that we have independent roots and may not always tow the government line. Yesterday at a dinner, the person in charge of SD introduced the governments and 'then the others'. They just don't like that we play a prominent role, last year I chaired a panel at HLPF 'they need a woman from the south' etc., and he [the government officer] saw me and was surprised. They feel challenged, because we question them. You can't call major hydro sustainable for instance, when they say things like that how do you keep your mouth shut, they don't like confrontations and don't like that we are loud and talk about rights, it is seen as an opposing thing to working with the government (Personal communication, Bangkok, 2019).

These somewhat contradictory experiences show that governmental receptiveness to the work of the CSOs depends on the issue covered and the

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specific government. The government in this case is more likely to be keen on social enterprises than environmental defenders, as the Philippine and Sri Lankan examples show. One is more matching with promoting business and entrepreneurship than the other, which is rights-based and exposes the ills of development. For the latter, even personal safety can become an issue. An AP-RCEM person from a country in the region and with intimate knowledge of AP-RCEM's Thematic Group on the Environment shared that the ability to "bring our national points to regional level motivates us to do our work nationally. It increases our own awareness and knowledge, but this is very dependent on country-to-country, since in other countries the regional level is the only forum to share concerns, since it is a safety risk to do so at national level, especially for rights-based organizations." She continued to say, "when you promote SCP you can get killed. In [the country in the region] we have increasing repression and Human Rights violations. [The] platform of RCEM is able to amplify the voices of those actually fighting against that on the ground. I saw that when we convened the Environment defenders workshop through RCEM [in 2018]" (Interview, Singapore, 2019).

Other AP-RCEM members from Nepal and Korea had shared that their experiences and connections through AP-RCEM helped them establish national CSO forums on the SDGs. As an interviewee from Nepal shared "…in Nepal for instance we have national CSO forum on SDGs, also Korea and Bangladesh [set those up inspired by AP-RCEM], so these are all actually inspired by the work of AP-RCEM. And whenever these bodies organize meetings they use information produced and shared by AP-RCEM." All these examples depend on the

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receptiveness of the governments involved, as well as the ability and capacity that single AP-RCEM members may have to engage at the national level. These and other experiences were rather unanticipated benefits of engaging, and there were other benefits that people shared during the research.

5.3.3. The Importance of 'Side-Spaces'

A CSO representative from a Philippine NGO, who had been involved in the beginning of AP-RCEM shared that the space in official UN processes that AP-RCEM has created is valuable, but the official process is not the only valuable space. For many of the CSOs that engage, the engagement with the UN is not their primary objective, the grassroot engagement at home is. He said:

"We use different language depending on where we go, which processes we enter and try to influence. We know that this is part of how you lobby, but some of our more political allies get confused." He also gave an example of such engagement away from the official process, and said for example that "urban poor engage not necessarily because they believe a lot in the official UN process, but because through engaging, their cause gets exposure, solidarity, and attention from other groups that engage as well as from international media." In this particular case, the researcher followed up the conversation and spoke to a representative from the Urban Poor constituency during a taxi ride to the APFSD. He recounted: "In 2018 the Urban Poor constituency made a statement at the APFSD, which was picked up by Reuters. This in turn caused [country in the region] domestic media to pick it up. As a result the Urban Poor suddenly got room to dialogue with the government about their situation at the national level. Whether or not the official process is just a show, the attention that I can get at home to positively influence the concerns of my organization is real." This means

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that the official process facilitates a wide range of dialogues in hallways, meeting rooms and even in taxis. In 2019, the urban poor constituent thus shared that he was "…meeting bilaterally with UN-Habitat to network, collaborate or in best case to achieve project funding and the official forum is not really my concern. There is a public misconception or unwillingness to confront massive problems related to urban poor and homeless. People don't like to see slums, so want to ignore them. On the other hand, if 2-3 Indigenous People are killed it automatically gets massive attention. So you see, there is a difference in the visibility here, where people tend to respect and defend their ancient cultures (IPs) rather than those who you know, were not successful and ended up as urban poor (Personal communication, Bangkok, March 2019).

Another comment brought some background information to why and how people engage beyond the formal processes: "Even among CSO groups there is a fight for space, [the] battle of individuals is huge, [because they are] fighting for limited resources. It is mind blowing how much they travel, spend their lives to be at these meetings, they have to spend so much time negotiating your space, and it is more on, like, the kinds of relationships that you build, rather than clear concrete plans or positions that you take. But you do have to be consistent in your thoughts, other than that it is all about relationships and networking" (Personal communication, Bangkok, 2019).

The comment from the urban poor representative here, as well as from conversations with other observers, shows that AP-RCEM members attended the official processes for various reasons. For some, the less formal spaces that

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opened up became important, while others focused on getting language into official outcome documents. Such language is often a result of a compromise and lobbying skills that not all possess (see Section 5.5 for more discussion).

5.3.4. Strengths and Contributions

The large and diverse AP-RCEM platform had succeeded in creating a voice for pertinent issues to be appreciated at the intergovernmental level. As constituencies of Workers and Trade Unions, as well as Farmers recognized there were "…many AP-RCEM advocacies that didn't have workers perspectives. But now it is there," or… "…At UNEA and even at NYC, farmers are now engaging regularly, that is a result of AP-RCEM. We used to be very peripheral players, but we now feel we have a face" (Personal communication, Singapore 2019). The power of AP-RCEM in bringing together large groups of people from different thematic constituencies and geographical regions had other benefits. For example, as a focal point for Indigenous Peoples' (IPs) stated "not one constituency can do much alone, so to amplify different voices you need to get together with others. IPs speaking alone compared to a regional platform speaking on behalf of IPs gives it amplified voice. If you're lobbying with governments and they don't even support you, easy to ignore you; if you come in with other groups saying the same thing it becomes harder to ignore you. If we go individually we lose, but as collective we can win and make our voices heard from the local level" (Personal communication, Singapore 2019).

Another person from South Asia added in relation to that, "AP-RCEM has democratized the space. We have not just gotten funding from the UN but have done our own fundraising from other IOs. In this way we are providing more

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spaces for organizations that not usually can come to these processes. In that way we kind of created a democratisation where the usual 'rich' organizations are no longer the only ones who have a space. This is more balanced. We are staying true to our principle of a positive bias towards grassroots organizations" (Personal communication, Singapore, 2019).

In a group though, diverse perspectives can lead to conflicts, and probably do once the group gets to a level of detail in their asks that reveal trade-offs between different constituency objectives. However, AP-RCEM relies on small informal working groups to discuss key issues ahead of crafting statements by a dedicated 'drafting team' that also resolves conflicts of interest and works to achieve compromises and consensus. This way, the AP-RCEM has worked to allow its participants to see the interconnections between issues. For example "[AP-RCEM] has been effective in tying together and integrating people's perspectives on the environment" (Personal communication, Singapore, 2019). In that sense, the large group has been very effective in illustrating the need for taking an integrated approach to sustainable development. As a participant from the Philippines (Singapore, 2019) shared that "AP-RCEM is different because it tries to bring in not just political networks but multi-constituencies. Previously with the MGs there were alliances within constituencies, but in RCEM there are alliances across geography and thematic tracks". This builds solidarity, which is one of the main objectives of the AP-RCEM, that it is "not just facilitating CSOs [engagement] in the UN but also facilitating CSOs to build solidarity among each other. The networks created by AP-RCEM helps move something like that."

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This solidarity supports an integrated view allowing issues to be recognised more broadly perhaps even better than governments can. For example, a constituency focal point for Farmers pointed out that "the word food sovereignty wasn't used much before, but at least now the UN is using the term". He continued, "…in this framework I been able to bring many of these concerns to, which most of the time people tend to ignore; for example right to land which is a crucial issue for landless farmers especially in South Asian countries" (Personal communication, Singapore, 2019). In the same context, a Trade Union focal point explained, "…we were able to better link different SDGs to SDG 8. Now more trade unions get to know other AP-RCEM constituencies and are becoming part of national SDG monitoring processes, so from a regional initiative AP-RCEM was able to facilitate interest in national advocacies" (Personal communication, Singapore, 2019). A Youth representative pointed out that "My organization has also been able to feed info from local to region, and also bringing information from global and regional to local levels. So policy makers can listen to voices from the peoples" (Personal communication, Singapore, 2019). This integration is a core function of the AP-RCEM that it aims to create consolidated statements, which are a co-creation by all participants at the Peoples' Forums. It has empowering effects, because as an IPP focal point explained, "…our contributions were recognised and captured within a platform of CSO actors; not just us internal to the sector but others are supporting our positions too and connecting our issues with other sectoral issues and leveraging on collective statement" (Personal communication, Singapore, 2019).

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Unity does not equal necessarily that radical or fringe voices are not recognised in the AP-RCEM. They use the development justice framework to accommodate different views. As one interviewee from the AP-RCEM AG pointed out, "RCEM has made significant impact on broader level, by bringing the idea of development justice into the regional conversation. With that, RCEM is challenging structural barriers, which I think none of the 'usual suspects' are doing" (Personal communication, Bangkok, 2019). A South Asian regional focal point commented relatedly "it is very difficult to give space to CSOs and democratize the UN; [it is a] very tough task because [it is] affected by many factors. This is related to the sharing of power; and they tend to not share the power. But RCEM has to some extent created [their] own space and trying to influence the governments also" (Personal communication, Singapore, 2019).

5.3.5. Challenges

AP-RCEM had also faced several challenges, some of which pertained to capacities of members, differing objectives for engaging, and the imagined 'regional' space, among others. This section covers some of those challenges encountered during the research.

Making the regional real

One AP-RCEM AG member commented (Personal communication, Bangkok, 2019) on the value of international and regional spaces that she thought, "… the whole international space is important because you can distance yourself emotionally. At local level the friction is so stark, everything is personal, sparked with emotion. Because you are critiquing your own people and governments, it becomes a personal battle over your own principles, like on human rights. But you can take that to the regional or global level and say it without these emotions

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to a different audience. I think that is why the local-global platform [like AP-RCEM] is important. But the crazy carbon footprint on something that's supposed to help the environment, it is really ironic. So it is very difficult for me to go to all of these meetings, because you have to choose your battles wisely." So it seems the regional space is a safe space because the power there is limited and with little consequences. Another person (Personal communication, Singapore, 2019) commented more critically "Whatever we say here [in Singapore], at the local level the policies still remain anti people. So the real change has to happen outside of the UN, and the lesson is to strengthen local level engagement, and [the] regional one is just an amplification of what is not being heard at the local level." Working at the regional level may be a 'bubble' with few consequences. As a member of the AG commented, "Engagement at regional level is like running after a dream, regional entity is always an imagined thing. It is like shadow boxing, you engage with institutions that always say: it is up to member states. But we all know that these institutions do have agenda setting power. Regional is a difficult dance, because there is no accountability, governments are not accountable at regional levels. But if we keep pushing maybe one day, there will be regional accountability like in the EU" (Personal communication, Tokyo, 2019). More critical voices commented on AP-RCEM's impacts (Personal communication, Bangkok 2019), "…really, how much more time should you dedicate to influencing the UN when it doesn't make binding decisions anyway, and where no regional governments really view it [UN regional] as important. For many people it is simply a space to amplify their messages that is all. And the way you can amplify your message is through being well organized and it helps if

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you have numbers, technical knowledge and arguments that are based on evidence. This is the next level after creating solidarity."

Solidarity or engagement

Some have also criticized the AP-RCEM for being 'thin' on engagement. Whilst it had achieved notable recognition regionally and globally, nationally there were few examples (some documented above). One person (Personal communication, Singapore 2019) said, "[we] need to be familiar with modalities of engagement, but some are not, and actually they don't care, because for them it is more important to bring out issues, for solidarity purposes this is important." She continued that "[AP-RCEM] is called engagement mechanism, not a solidarity mechanism;" and added that the engagement might not have much impact and saying, "there is no point talking if the other part is not listening, it is becoming a talk shop, part of reality, but things should improve over time. Be specific on what you really want; it would [be] better link to the ground issues."

Another person from the AP-RCEM AG said in the same vein that "we have two agendas (i) solidarity; and (ii) the engagement, the latter needs to be more systematized. On one hand, we talk a lot on movement building, but somehow we are not achieving what we talk. What do we want to get out of that engagement, in every engagement what is our objective, strategically; not just go and build solidarity. If we talk about the same things every year, we are not advancing. We need to try to influence how governments are coming out with resolutions, not just be there. We need to find 'who are champions of issue x, how do neutralize those who are against etc.'. I don't expect everybody to do it, but [we] need to

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reflect on how we go in that direction" (Personal communication, Singapore, 2019).

The different objectives of AP-RCEM members then come to the fore. Some are old hands in the CSO world and have strong voices, which are often heard, whereas others struggle to see meaning and be heard. In a sense this is not much different from any other non-SDG related process. Capacity, experience and technical knowledge mean power, also in AP-RCEM. The ambitious members (A farmers representative) complained "…while I see RCEM becoming very attractive, internally constituencies are not matching with that pace - in terms of providing content, in terms of going deeper into the issues. By this time we should have [a] deeper analysis of what we mean by development justice, by systemic barriers and so on. Constituencies are not matching the energy and intensity of overall AP-RCEM. How do you develop that side of it? We haven't yet had a candid analysis of how we are doing internally"(Personal communication, Singapore, 2019). Another person commented in that respect "[we are] always talking about systemic barriers, but [we] are not fleshing it out as engagement tool, bring some realities on the ground so governments can understand! The way we present our issues, [it is] important that we also link to realities on the ground, not just slogans and ideological stuff; the latter works for us and builds solidarity, but it doesn't necessarily make an impact if we don't also give it more substance" (Personal communication, Singapore, 2019).

It means the capacity and ability to engage among AP-RCEM members is not equal. Some, often those who hail from larger well-resourced organizations or

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networks are comparatively more influential and able to bring greater substance to their engagement, while others are happy to simply participate. As everyone contributes voluntarily, the contributions are not the same. Voluntarism has its pros and cons, as the next section discusses.

Limitations and risks of volunteerism

A representative from farmers and women's constituency shared "a weakness is that it [AP-RCEM] is voluntary. We depend on committed individuals and organizations." She added "because it is informal it is not too institutionalized; there is no feeling of distance or domination or worry about fundraising. It attracts people who are committed and passionate about RCEM's themes. This is also a weakness, because volunteers cannot sustain. How do we then work out a mechanism where the informality is retained and institutionalization is as much as needed but not too much?" (Personal communication, Singapore, 2019) A more critical comment from another farmers' representative elaborated, "Many of us might be reconsidering our engagement, because if our voices are not incorporated into the official document and [we don't get to] express our view in front of the parties, then what is the purpose? Some people might disagree with this view, especially those who might be invited for several years and whose opinions are sought, often on an individual basis. When only a few AP-RCEM individuals really run the show and determine content, it is easier for a small group to decide and dominate directions of the work" (Personal communication, Singapore, 2019).

It is a fact that over the years, statements the same few constituency representatives have delivered the majority of statements, often it is because

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they are more seasoned and have a position ready. There is dominance by those with more expertise and experience, but the AP-RCEM leaders (the co-chairs) are encouraging those who haven't made their voices heard during speaker selection processes ahead of the APFSDs. Joint statements are then encouraged to express the diversity and to solve problems of lacking speakers.

Many of the challenges mentioned are a direct consequence of AP-RCEM's informal nature. It has an unofficial and de facto secretariat, shouldered in-kind by a women's rights group in Thailand since 2014. There is no core funding for AP-RCEM, which means that every event or every mobilization of AP-RCEM has to depend on piecemeal support from different donors (Table 6, Chapter 4). In the past the UN (both UN Environment and ESCAP) provided some financial support, mainly because organizing CSO engagement at their annual forum and events was mandated by member states and normally a task done by UN staff. The AP-RCEM is 'doing' it for them "rather conveniently" (Personal communication, UN Official, Bangkok, 2019) actually lightening the burden of those UN staffs that have to otherwise organize it. But the fact is that everyone at AP-RCEM works voluntarily to keep AP-RCEM floating and develop its inputs coming into the SDGs processes. That is partly the reason why there has been little development in AP-RCEM's positions over the years and why a few members can dominate the directions and work of the AP-RCEM since capacity is not really being developed more broadly. There have been no dedicated resources to undertake much research and unpack the claims regarding systemic barriers, development justice, or proving more convincingly that CSO space for participation is indeed shrinking. This is recognised also by its members,

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according to the following comment (Personal communication, Singapore, 2019), that "Voluntarism brings people together much better than any other resource. But I think there is a need to have a conversation of greater length to decide whether and how AP-RCEM should continue and whether it should have a formal institutionalization or registration."

Overall

AP-RCEM has created a movement around the SDGs at the regional level. AP-RCEM itself is not that movement, but it has facilitated it. The notion of a regional space to remind governments of their commitments in the 2030 Agenda is something that AP-RCEM's work has helped institutionalize, and which the regional UN bodies have appreciated at a time when they are struggling for continued relevance when many governments are increasingly skeptic of the multilateral system.

AP-RCEM began its existence as an engagement mechanism pointing out the systemic problems of neoliberalism and its impacts on marginalized peoples', as well as calls for development justice as one way to counter it. Even though they often criticized governments, the analysis showed that the ills of development, which the AP-RCEM liked to point out, should be approached by reinvigorating sovereign power in the 'development equation'. The many interviews, surveys and observations throughout the researched engagement time though reveals that even though the AP-RCEM and its development justice framework could most suitably be classified as neo-Marxist and a 'liberation' governmentality, the forms of government they supported, and also the structure and rationale for the 'independent' engagement mechanism itself shows that they themselves took on

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board many advanced liberal (or even neoliberal) techniques. The fact that the UN doesn't have to be 'inconvenienced' to organize CSO engagement from the top-down, as it had been the case until Agenda 2030, shows that the efforts to create ownership of the SDGs process by opening it up has worked, and AP-RCEM are knowledgeable on linkages between thematic issues and are good advocates for the continued importance and relevance of the UN agenda. In that sense, the AP-RCEM have become subject to the governmentality of the UN Sustainable Development Agenda, and also proudly conduct their own conduct to fit into the regional space which itself is a creation of the liberal system.

5.4. The Theatre of Engagement

After being engaged in the SDGs process and attending many forums, expert meetings, intergovernmental meetings and others over the last 7 years, one cannot help to think that some of it is a performance, or a theatre, where different 'players' have roles and are expected to act in certain ways. Some play bigger roles than others, and the size of their 'role' even among CSOs often depends on the extent to which individuals are intimately familiar with the international organizations' agendas and play into them, rather than just resisting. This means for the CSOs, for instance, that 'expert' CSO individuals will get more air time than grass-root CSOs, but in doing so, will sanction techniques of governing that reinforce the power of expert knowledge and enable its work to continue unabatedly, while providing less airtime to those who do not possess as much, or different types of, expert knowledge.

During personal communications with AP-RCEM volunteers in early 2019, the researcher had conversations regarding the consolidated statements that have

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largely set AP-RCEM apart from previous CSO initiatives and the difficulty of consensus. The diversity of the AP-RCEM platform could be a challenge to bring together people with vastly different perspectives, but as one person commented, "it is also a positive element to create broader understanding of those different perspectives". Another person pointed out that "instead of looking at how different our positions are we look at how we can still work together". There was also talk about blocks and coalitions and the fact that consensus rarely is 'real' consensus, but that strategic placement of language and a well-organized drafting process could often create a consensus.

This resembles advocacy coalition frameworks, which has been used to analyze how decisions are made in activism (Sabatier, 1987; Sabatier & Christopher, 2007). In this context, one AP-RCEM veteran mentioned, "If you are well organized you don't have to be large, then you can lead a large group like the AP-RCEM. Development Justice is an example of that. We created a coalition around it. Ibon International took the initiative to draft the Bangkok Declaration in 2013 [(Asia-Pacific Regional CSO Engagement Mechanism, 2013)]. It is not completely conspiratorial that a small group decides for everyone else, but there is a common position within the block and then this block subjects the common position to the larger body. It is not imposing, but the fact [is] that they can take the initiative and convince players within the larger field. It is the same case with the annual consolidated statements actually...that some people throw in important issues and they are accepted by a larger audience of diverse groups, and with this the individuals get a mandate to go out with this message spreading it with larger weight than if it was their own organization only. As AP-

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RCEM members are saying now, we are too large to ignore. I have no problems with such play as long as it is principled…you want leadership because you get the funds and prestige. But I really believe in this cause and message and I want as many people as possible to back it up, so my conscience is clear" (Personal communication, Bangkok, 2019).

This shows that the much-lauded consensus and consolidation, which is a notable strength of AP-ARCEM, and which sets them apart from the in-fights and conflicts that CSO and NGO groups spend a lot of energy on, is not always a 'real' consensus. It shows that there are a few individuals in the AP-RCEM group that, due to their technical knowledge, managerial skills and capacity, gain greater access to the processes in question. That in turn enables them to shape the agenda to a greater extent perhaps that many others in the large platform. It goes to show that the power of expertise is real, also for the 'grassroot' platform of AP-RCEM.

Another moot point, which perhaps is not intentional, is that AP-RCEM organizes the Peoples' Forum. Since it is an open 'peoples' forum, participants are not all AP-RCEM members. Despite that, the people's forum functions as AP-RCEM's parliament, and decisions are vetted pertaining to constituencies during that forum. That actually contradicts AP-RCEM's governance structures, as decisions should be internal to AP-RCEM and not happen at an open forum. It gets even more complicated with the AP-RCEM consolidated statement, it is really a peoples' statement and not exclusively drafted based on AP-RCEM members' inputs. But when statements are made during APFSD, it is always 'on behalf of

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RCEM' thereby neglecting or forgetting that the statement was made based on contributions by CSOs that are not all AP-RCEM members.

Another colleague from a South Asian NGO shared a similar message. She said that, "The AP-RCEM platform's larger messages maybe not so important, they are imprecise and vague to allow consensus and thus can facilitate impact of more narrowly defined content in other forums. So, for example messages on trade that [organization] uses to engage WTO are mandated through AP-RCEM. Those that draft the consensus statement often have a considerable influence on what will be said and how it will be presented. Inputs from constituencies are of course reflected. But people usually check that their language is there, and not so carefully check what other language is also there" (Personal communication, Bangkok, 2019).

It means that the focus on structural barriers to sustainable development and Development Justice, which remain relatively undefined in AP-RCEM's consolidated statements, are vague to facilitate the overall consensus among the larger AP-RCEM platform. This consensus is then used, as it creates a powerful statement which individuals then can use to lobby their more specific causes (in this conversation international trade negotiations specifically) elsewhere such as at the World Trade Organization (WTO) or at the World Economic Forum (Personal communication, Bangkok, 2019). This shows that the 'liberation' rationalities as advocated by the AP-RCEM are becoming a governmentality and a form of useful power in itself, but that it is most effectively used by a limited number of individuals to further organizational (or individual) interests.

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The development of AP-RCEM's engagement points on Development Justice and structural barriers has stayed largely the same over the years, and people within the platform have recognized this weakness. The demands and asks that came from the platform at the international meetings did not go deep enough but remained rather general statements in a critique of the neoliberalisation of development. The few individuals that took this further were really those with several years of experience in UN engagement and work on the ground and are probably those who will benefit from the engagement professionally and financially. Whilst they represent different CSO groups, they really are experts in their own right and are embedded in the development industry, being called upon by development actors to implement projects, while the situation for those with less experience and capacity is not changing or improving. In that sense, the AP-RCEM having made notable impacts on engagement structures of the UN both regionally and globally, it has not changed the fact that knowledge and expertise is still considered powerful in this arena and only the few capacitated individuals derive the most benefits from their engagement, whereas others merely get a chance to 'participate' in large prestigious conferences. This may also explain why beyond drawing attention to important shadow-sides of development, the AP-RCEM's real impacts, in terms of SDG implementation are yet to be seen. The ability to engage depends on knowledge and capacity, which is why AP-RCEM has been better at mobilizing solidarity than producing actual impacts on the ground from their continued engagement. For engagement it is usually a few chosen individuals that get to be on center stage, but the process remains not very transformative. AP-RCEM is thereby legitimizing the SDG process by showing how inclusive it is. This may be problematic, since inclusiveness should

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be a means and not an end in itself. It is an important means, but if the effort stops once inclusion in process has been achieved, then the liberatory potential of this type of effort or engagement risks falling short.

Even though the beginning of this chapter stated that the UN caters to their primary client–Member States, the organization represents the embodiment of the liberal world order. This world order is often performed at the regional and global stages with doubtful follow-up at the national levels. For instance, when the SDGs were formally agreed at the Sustainable Development Summit in September 2015 in New York UN HQ, the UN functioned as a stage for governments to perform apparent goodwill with little thought to actual implementation. Countries who were not known for their social democratic governance or their adherence to the multilateral system talked at length about the possibilities of international financial transaction taxes (France), or the need to act together (US), details of which had been observed and documented in Chapter 4 above (Researcher's observation, New York, 2015).

Comparing captivating statements made on the global stage with actual SDG implementation a few years later, it becomes clear that the UN Summit was mostly a performance of good intentions. In the context of governmentality, the UN summits could thus be seen, as mere theatre stages where trust and value of the multilateral system was expressed, but which has little relevance beyond the General Assembly. Several details, such as contradicting policies, or movements towards isolationism had already been apparent in 2015, but were mostly omitted in the researched meetings, as were often just a celebration of

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multilateralism, shying away from the crisis that it is in, and with little real effect on realities outside the conference rooms.

One may ask whether this performance helps or hinders addressing the real challenges outside the doors of the UN meetings, or whether as some argue, this spectacle of performance merely keeps the multilateral system busy at least until 2030, with little influence on a 'different' world where trust and cooperation are not a valued currency and where countries largely stand on their own or act minilaterally (Ciplet & Roberts, 2017), unable or unwilling to effectively combat government and civil society's disenfranchisement by neoliberal power grab. In that perspective, promises and expectations become the currency of the international meetings (Lund et al., 2017). And it is less important whether these promises will ever be met, because new promises will be articulated in time to replace unmet ones to keep the international system busy. This is markedly different from economic sanctions regimes where non-compliance has real consequences.

That the real effect of the UN allowing more radical voices to be present in these intergovernmental meetings is questionable, or just a performance for the sake for the sake of appeasement, can also be seen in the following comment. A person from the Philippines, who coordinated AP-RCEM's Thematic Work Group on Environment, also reflected on the ultimate impact of AP-RCEM's engagement. She lamented "you engage and talk to them [UN and member states], but you're still criticizing saying that there's a big space given to business, we got one day for CSOs, but all documents and all here is dominated

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by business 'green economy etc." She continued, "The DJ framework is able to capture what is really wrong with society and telling it here, but [it is] difficult to measure if you're successful enough, [because] when you go to UNEA they all just embrace green economy and 'green' business" (Personal communication, Singapore, 2019).

Even though perhaps governments make beautiful but rather fictitious statements, as is expected in UN summitry, the organization does have influence. As other authors (Bettiza et al., 2014; Fukuda-Parr & Hulme, 2011) have discussed the organization shapes the sustainable development discourse through its many norm entrepreneurs that are among the UN staff and who understand that providing space to more radical groups such as the AP-RCEM is necessary to at least give a voice to the themes which the 'elite summitry' normally prefers to omit. Some of these norm entrepreneurs that are civil servants of the UN indeed know how to play the field so that messages, which they support permeate the boundaries of what they themselves can say. In that context there were several instances during the years of research where UN staff used AP-RCEM members to support their own agendas. One concrete example was the long-standing and vocal support for ESCAP's Regional Roadmap on SDG implementation, which AP-RCEM kept pushing for and still keeps reminding the multilaterals about even though the governments are not really interested in a regional accountability mechanism. The ideas and the areas of support for this roadmap, which the AP-RCEM could represent, were developed through informal conversations between ESCAP staff and AP-RCEM members themselves. Indeed, the recent AP-RCEM evaluation (Zaman and Quintos, Forthcoming) has several

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recommendations where AP-RCEM can play an active role in working to increase the importance of this roadmap, in the hope that that will eventually bring governments to respond to it, rather than silently ignore what they agreed to in 2017. In this context, there was some suspicion from the AP-RCEM members themselves that ESCAP supports them because they want to instrumentalize the AP-RCEM to bring ESCAP voices to different actors, lend credibility to those voices by making the messages 'go through' the AP-RCEM. But some inadvertently admit that the space and appetite for alternative voices remains limited. As one UN staff commented (AP-RCEM Evaluation, Forthcoming), "If AP-RCEM is going to come up with knowledge products that are not explicitly APFSD, SDGs or Agenda 2030, then its not gonna be taken into the UN agenda." So AP-RCEM can talk all they want about grassroots concerns, but unless it links to the official agenda, it will not be adopted.

5.4.1. On Roles and Rationalities

The reasons for why 'transformative' or liberation rationalities were abound in the different analyzed outcome documents have to do with the UN itself. A lot of the liberation rationality is also core UN value, as it is based on normative statements concerning 'how the world ought to be'. Examples here are rights and norms. Stakeholder engagement was often mentioned as one of the essential or important elements of strengthening governance for sustainable development, but most of the time, the functions of such engagement is highlighted to be to bring in good practices or to improve transparency of engagement itself, not necessarily as a technique to strengthen accountability of states, or business actors, to the agreements being made. Anything that has a concrete definition of legal/illegal, such as mining for instance, attracts sovereign (command-and-

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control) governing techniques. But since by far most of the problem areas surrounding sustainable development have yet to be precisely defined as legal/illegal, the strong regulatory forms of power are not used much. Instead the choice could be one that depends on rights, on stakeholder engagement to be governed, but in most cases liberal and neoliberal techniques of governing were suggested. This is not surprising given that sustainable development itself was coined as a conceptual unity between the need for environmental conservation and economic growth, largely disregarding the inherent conflict between the two (Paton, 2011).

In some ways the declaratory outcome documents of the UN almost always promote a mix of types of government, sanctioned by national governments, and then either brought into action, or ignored in favor of other priorities. One clear example from TFWW related to private sector development, and where sovereign and neoliberal techniques (or areas of intervention) were highlighted to meet more ambitious rationalities: "…pursue appropriate national policy and regulatory frameworks in a manner consistent with national laws to encourage public and private initiatives, including at the local level, to foster a dynamic and well-functioning business sector, and to facilitate entrepreneurship and innovation, including among women, the poor and the vulnerable" (United Nations, 2012, para. 268). Here one could observe how rationalities and roles of governments, business and the 'poor and vulnerable' were put together to support local development.

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The mosaic of different governmentalities then often is one, where government is supposed to control (or sanction) by using sovereign types of power; the private sector is brought in to make it happen, increasingly so in the most recent decades, and then gradually CSOs are brought in to legitimize (or contest) whatever was or was not happening according to any voluntary agreement. So, the answer of how the SDGs govern is through bringing in blended powers, all of course soft, since the only ones that can wield concrete powers are the sovereigns. The mix has to be balanced between the actions (and subjectivities) that can undertake the functions of controlling, acting, and legitimizing. That performance is a delicate balancing act that keeps the multilateral system alive in times where it really is in crisis.

The SDGs then, are actually a mix of different types of power, using primarily sovereign and neoliberal techniques of governing. They are disciplinary because they are based on the monitoring, reporting and benchmarking of country performance, which are neoliberal techniques of governing; they encourage countries to conduct their own conduct based on the knowledge of their own performance that is brought about by the indicators and performance benchmarking.

One other thing to keep in mind is that while radical or transformative rationalities/discourse elements also abound and function as anchoring points for groups such as the AP-RCEM to resist the 'neoliberalisation' of the discourse, they are in many cases suggested to be implemented through advanced liberal governance techniques. So it's not that any radical proposal necessarily leads to a

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different approach to development, but that it in some cases indirectly promotes liberal and neoliberal approaches to governing. Examples here included the improvement of capacities of marginalized peoples to allow them to fully take part in economic activities. While such intervention could arguably improve equality, it would not address the systemic barriers to sustainable development, which, as AP-RCEM's preoccupation with these barriers indicated, often remained if at all marginally addressed in processes and outcomes from Rio+20 through the SDGs. In that sense the official processes surrounding the SDGs are not directly transformative, but they are providing space to those that might be, like the AP-RCEM.

Equally, the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs contain different discursive elements as solutions to the problem of unsustainability. Since they are aspirational goals that merely point out the desired endpoint, there is no need to worry about the clash or conflict between those discourses. But as we move into implementation, there is bound to be both alignment and conflict between those different discourses and their adherents because some, for example involvement of multinationals to generate economic activity vs. ensuring the rights of workers can be mutually offsetting unless the right regulations are in place. The meeting of these discourses therefore represents a major challenge to integration, one that most often is not mentioned by much of the prevalent sustainability science that rather focuses on how to coordinate and integrate technically. How these discourses (do and do not) align and resolve however will be decisive for the transformative potential of the SDGs, and it therefore demands more attention.

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This mosaic or different types of governing may have several explanations. For one, as the introductory chapter explained, the goals were not formulated in a vacuum by experts like the MDGs but were crafted in a very inclusive process. That way a diversity of views and discourse adherents managed to get their priority areas reflected. Additionally, the strong presence of neoliberal discourse signifiers largely reflects the realities outside the sustainability circuit and its influence. Much of our current reality is characterized by globalization and neoliberalism, and it would be important to speak to that trend in order for the agenda to be viewed as relevant for advocates of this trend. The 2030 agenda continued the neoliberal discourse relying on 'partnership for development', and engagement of the private sector at numerous occasions. But it does, however indirectly recognize the pitfalls of a rampant neoliberalism. In several places there is mention of preferential treatment of developing and least developed countries, "promotion of a universal, rules-based, open, non-discriminatory and equitable multilateral trading system…" (SDG 17.10) increasing market access of least developed countries; countering corruption, and others. The 2030 agenda probably hit a delicate balance between being too supportive of the neoliberal system and being too prescriptive and radical for either to reach an agreement or be ignored and become an agenda nobody followed. One can then call it a 'transformative' agenda regardless whether it really is transformative but if that works for one's own or organizational agenda, it will suffice because then one is on board, 'governed' by the SDGs and assumed to support their overall direction.

When prompted directly (Personal communication, Bangkok, 2019) on whether the engagement of AP-RCEM with regional and international processes in reality

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lends credibility to the advanced liberal system that has allowed neoliberalism to flourish, one AP-RCEM AG member responded: “Advanced liberalism and neoliberalism is not all bad. It does promote self-driven innovation and it does create the elements needed for innovation, but the problem is that it has no ethical boundaries or frames of action except individual entrepreneurship that lends itself to greed. A neoliberal space is not really an open space, but remains dominated by those who have more power than others, and that is where the problems arise-also for Agenda 2030”. She continued: “It is very difficult to critique the neoliberal system consistently, all the tools we use are modern and created by liberalism and neoliberalism also, and [we] have benefitted from education that it has brought. We aren't always the poorest and downtrodden. We do battle for them, but we are not 'them' in many senses. Some people ARE real, but some of us just represent. They are the ones, like fisher folks who are actually fishers; they should claim that space. Neoliberalism has created this horrible structure that requires me to be here when I can navigate it and they can’t. Also if you give them the task and ask them to do it, they would say no what nonsense, why should I sit in a room full of people? To be really self critical, we are within a neoliberal structure and there is so much hypocrisy because we are sometimes trying to do things and we are not able to find the alternatives to the system we are stuck in. If I really want to do something about the environment, can I do something more personal and fulfilling and authentic than this? Just about living more sustainably. Even we are aware and we know; it is almost impossible to get out of that super structure. For me it is not about telling them they should not have running water or electricity, but when we are making goods that we also make stuff that helps peoples lives get better. Why are [we]

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obsessed with phones and TVs, we should ensure the basics. The richest people then think their contributions are philanthropy, why don't they just create good stuff in the first place? Neoliberal base is bad because there is NO sort of ethical consideration in business models. It needs that."

Most of the people interviewed for this research acknowledged that there was a relation between neoliberalism and AP-RCEM's activities, but some dismissed it as a cynical lens that "one could choose" (Personal communication, Tokyo, 2019). They said that in light of national governments ignoring or actively suppressing them they had no choice but to resort to the international processes to be heard and recognised. There were also those among the AP-RCEM who remained highly idealistic and complemented the importance of regional engagement, solidarity, and a strong common position (Personal communication, Chiang Mai, 2019), because after all, working to promote the grassroot voices was part of their professional job. Thus, the reasons for engaging are often a combination of personal convictions, ideology, and professionalism. The next chapter presents the key findings and contributions and offers some suggestions for future directions of this type of research.

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Chapter 6: Key Findings and Conclusion

This chapter presents key findings and reflections of the research, which was undertaken over the period of 6 years (2013-2019). It begins with presenting how the research answered the research posed at the beginning of the dissertation.

RQ 1 on - *How do the SDGs reproduce or change the mainstream development/sustainable development narrative?* - was discussed and answered across several chapters. In Chapter 2, a historical perspective using several arguments from literature (Banerjee, 2003; Lund et al., 2017; Svarstad et al., 2018) argued that sustainable development was a compromise concept uniting the ideas of economic growth with environmental conservation, which had made it highly political and problematic from the beginning, but that the political and difficult to resolve questions inherent in the concept had gone largely unanswered from the policy side. Instead, there had been a focus on technical and managerial solutions to the problems of unsustainability, largely influenced by Northern and Western notions of ecological modernization. In that sense, the sustainable development narrative leaned on its predecessor, the development discourse that had been all about economic development, creating pockets of elites with large parts of the populations left behind (Ziai, 2016). Based on the data collected throughout the research and presented in Chapter 4, Chapter 5 discussed how this narrative spilled over and influenced also the SDGs. It illustrated this by showing the main forms of governing that had been proposed as useful to implement the SDGs, which were dominated by advanced liberal, and neoliberal governmentalities. The SDGs did, however, also contain other anchors.

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Firstly there was a reaffirmation of the sovereign, as counterbalance to the increasing 'privatization' of development, and there were also elements that lent themselves to more radical interpretations of sustainability (Death & Gabay, 2015). Based on its very inclusive formulation and its universal reach, the global SDGs did break new ground in the sustainable development narrative, pending on how actors would take up and generate action around the 2030 Agenda, related to which they had a lot of flexibility and only symbolic accountability through indicators and VNRs. Based on the post-structural approach that was discussed in Chapter 2, the research also found that the strong emphasis on universality and inclusiveness, which is a core tenet of the SDGs, is a 'governmentality' in itself. Since the world, influenced by distrust in the multilateral system characterized by multipolarity, new power structures contest and replace old ones. At this stage, the voluntary SDGs are an advanced liberal form of 'governing by goals' (Kanie & Biermann, 2017), which contain ample examples of neoliberal techniques of governing, based on advanced liberal rationalities of governing. This is only natural since the SDGs themselves were a product of the multilateral system, which itself is contingent on a liberal world order. The Agenda 2030 and many elements of governing within the 17 SDGs and 169 targets are also based on 'liberation' rationalities, where if fulfilled, the goals would arguably create a more fair and sustainable world. Moreover, the research found that the SDGs reflected a change in the development narrative-an apparent leveling of the playing field that recognised all countries equally, but which also highlighted two important aspects of neoliberal governmentality, namely 'responsibility for self' and the contestation among different types of power.

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RQ 2 on - *How do civil society actors engage with the SDGs at the regional level?* – was discussed and answered in Chapters 4 and 5. Chapter 2 first described the architecture and structure of the AP-RCEM and Chapter 4 analyzed its statements over the researched 5-year period. Chapter 5 then discussed the findings. Primarily the research showed that this group engaged fully with the regional SDGs process and expanded to also engage at global levels. The AP-RCEM engaged seemingly on its own premises, through the radical feminist Development Justice framework and based on its 18+5 different constituencies, thus self-organized more broadly than the traditional 'Nine Major Group' engagement approach of the UN. The study also found, based on the data presented and discussed in Chapters 4 and 5, how the AP-RCEM through its focus on consolidated statements and alliances across regions and constituencies, came to understand and use interlinkages and applying integrated approaches to their demands, as they related to different SDGs and themes, often better than government representatives, who still most often represent limited sectors of their governments. Moreover, the research found that the AP-RCEM was able to consistently highlight systemic issues, often related to neoliberalisation and corporatisation of development. These issues, which were often political, were consistently emphasized by the platform to the point that, at least at face value, the regional UN commission came to reflect them increasingly in the official outcome documents of the annual APFSDs. This apparent success in engaging the SDGs and reflecting more 'radical' or 'liberation' types of governmentalities at the regional and international levels, however, are no guarantee for any similar effect on governments' prioritization and implementation of the SDGs at national

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levels, even though there were examples of positive effects on national governments as a result of the AP-RCEM engaging the SDGs internationally.

RQ 3 on - *How do the SDGs shape regional engagement space between civil society and other actors?* –was discussed in chapters 4 and 5. Based on that it seemed that AP-RCEM's focus on bringing grassroot voices to the international stage, and the resulting solidarity at regional levels (and beyond), has widened the accepted space for interventions in the Asia-Pacific region's UN processes related to the SDGs. This was arguably an effect of the SDGs' strong focus on inclusiveness and participatory governance, as exemplified in its OWG crafting process between 2013-2015. Now the scale of 'regions' is becoming more accepted at global level CSO interventions related to the SDGs–as illustrated by the fact that AP-RCEM's model of engagement is now used in European and African engagement modalities with the regional UN commissions there, and that Latin America experimented with it but failed due to the power of existing large INGOs. At the Asia-Pacific regional level, while not possible to ascribe this impact entirely to AP-RCEM's existence and perseverance, the CSO engagement with ESCAP and UN Environment became wider and more comprehensive. This means that the 'liberation' intentions of AP-RCEM came to support the 'advanced liberal' international system, which the AP-RCEM has advocated to cause many of the ills of development they are contesting. At the same time, the widening engagement space, even it was mostly just at the level of conferences, forums, and text, given that it increasingly accommodates and respects grassroot voices, alongside the more 'service-delivery' and expert type of INGOs, the 'liberation'

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governmentality seems to have gradually become a recognised power, or governmentality in itself.

As a result of AP-RCEM's structure, it also came to embrace broader constituencies, especially those 'left-behind' whose voices normally do not get heard at the regional level, including constituencies beyond the traditional Major Groups system. Two other notable changes found in the research were (i) AP-RCEM's focus on consolidated statements to bring greater voice and power to their demands; which is something quite unseen in the CSO space and (ii) creating trust between the UN and the CSOs allowing the CSOs and their progressive 'People's Forum' to self- organize CSO inputs to the regional APFSD and UN Environment processes. The consolidation of positions and statements is somewhat promising, since the SDGs require taking an integrated approach, and hopefully the way in which the AP-RCEM has organized itself around themes and has managed to break persistent silos, could lend itself to inspiration also from governments. AP-RCEM's self-organization as quality and activity has made the task of ensuring CSO engagement easier for the UN since the insistence on self-organization by the AP-RCEM has meant that most of the heavy burden of fundraising, organizing and coordinating very diverse sets of CSO voices falls squarely on the CSOs themselves. In a sense that echoes the advanced liberal forms of governing that were discussed in Chapter 2, relying on existing research (Fletcher, 2010, 2017). In this case, ownership through inclusion is undertaken with the intention that objects to be governed will figure out a way to conduct their own conduct, or 'conduct of conduct' (Dean, 2010, 2017), which is a core

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tenet of governmentality. And with that, the SDGs have been quite impactful as example of advanced liberal form of governing.

RQ 4 on - *How do regional civil society engagement mechanisms negotiate and promote their spaces and positions in the official and non-official tracks?* – was arguably the most reflexive and broadest of the research questions. Data for this question derived almost entirely from interviews and informal conversations and observations that were made in the prolonged time of research. The question's ramifications became gradually clearer over time, as AP-RCEM developed relationships and individuals gradually found ways to negotiate their spaces in the formal processes and beyond.

Regarding the official spaces, AP-RCEM was able to, based on their grassroot power and solidarity under the Development Justice umbrella, impact the official outcome documents at the regional level, as was shown in Chapter 4. While this is laudable, the UN documents, which came to reflect more 'radical' and ambitious language that had derived from AP-RCEM's inputs and statements, were not negotiated and their political leverage value was therefore negligible. Despite that, it seems AP-RCEM made their mark branded on giving space to those that are normally marginalised in development processes and whose voices are rarely heard. Allowing these voices to be heard may also have helped the UN regain (or increase) credibility and importance as a result of embracing such 'authentic' voices from the global 'south'. Nevertheless, through cultivating close relationships with UN staff at the regional UN commission, AP-RCEM members were able to capitalize on the international agreements related to

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SDGs' follow-up and review giving them some agenda shaping and agenda setting power, thereby providing a balancing point to the 'power of expertise' and neoliberal governance techniques that otherwise dominate the SDG space.

Informally, other examples in the research in Chapter 5 illustrated how some members appreciate the participation at international events, but less for their official value, and instead have understood to use informal spaces to gain leverage to their specific issues (such as Urban Poor example in Chapter 5), either in other international spaces-based on AP-RCEM's powerful consolidated statements, or at national levels through doors that were opened once initial rapport had been made between CSOs and government official at the regional level. It is likely that these informal spaces at the end could prove more impactful than the official regional spaces where beyond the 'currency of good intentions' there is little appetite for real accountability.

6.1. Different Types of Power and Governmentality

In a greater and more philosophical perspective, the efforts of the CSOs to stand as a counterpoint to the neoliberal elements in the 2030 Agenda are evident throughout the five years of reviewed statements and engagement. As Chapter 4 illustrated, they skillfully draw from agreed language in the 2030 Agenda that emphasizes the importance of rights and justice to hold against other elements, equally in the 2030 Agenda, that contain references to private sector action and partnerships. To them, the problems of unsustainable development largely stem from liberal types of government (or non-governing) running rampant, but the types of solutions to that are often found in the emphasis on non-negotiable rights and calls for justice, which are also a part of the 2030 Agenda. In some

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cases, however, the AP-RCEM members (knowingly or unknowingly) refer to governance solutions that are also based on advanced liberal rationalities. Moreover, and related to the advanced liberal governance of the Agenda, it seems the CSOs are not flat-out against mobilizing and engaging the business sector, but point out that it must happen by establishing accountability mechanisms to ensure that the only motive is not profit or by promotion of social enterprises and in a way that promotes an 'ethical' angle of private sector engagement, without specifying how that would come about.

The considerable strengthening of CSO engagement in the UN-led processes of the 2030 Agenda, especially compared to more one-sided types of engagement of the past (like the Major Groups or the MDGs), hints that the CSOs are increasingly becoming an important element in mobilizing an agenda that is supposed to be transformative rather than just promoting more business as usual–even though the regional level that was examined here could be said to be merely a 'sand-box' testing new directions for the discourse without the accountability and tough policy choices that would be the order of the day at national and subnational levels. There are, nonetheless, few groups apart from grass-root platforms such as the AP-RCEM that can openly resist the increasing liberalisation of development. That this is happening is evident in a recently signed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) cementing a partnership between the UN and the World Economic Forum (World Economic Forum, 2019). The potential risks associated with embracing the neoliberal economic mainstream, however, may be well-recognised by supporters within some governments and within the UN; namely that the CSOs are an important element of power in their

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own respect in the governance of the SDGs by continuing to resist the neoliberalization of the Agenda, even though the UN would not explicitly admit that this is the case.

Interestingly, even though the initiatives such as the AP-RCEM can counter balance the neoliberal narrative through their focus on justice, rights and inclusiveness, they themselves also suggest liberal forms of government and governance to deal with the problems they perceive to be challenging the 2030 Agenda's prospects for implementation. Some of those depend on sovereign types of government to be implemented but are still clearly of liberal nature since they focus on market forces. These are mentioned in Chapter 4 and 5, but include progressive taxation, carbon trading, innovative financing, and others. There are other liberal governmentality interventions the AP-RCEM finds necessary to govern the SDGs. These are based on the multilateral system, which is a liberal construct and include reform of trade and investment rules; proposals for a regional tax forum (which has been ignored until now), overcoming IPR barriers as well as international mechanisms to protect the rights and freedoms of all. Others are also acknowledging the role of the market in today's world and include asks for promotion of social and market entrepreneurship and enterprise development, or investments focusing on livelihood creation such as green jobs; focus on rapid local growth, job creation and others. There are also calls for governmentalities that can help people better govern themselves such as promotion of the ways in which people themselves are taking action or calls for supporting the creation of local experts and leaders. So, the AP-RCEM members, even though they represent a resistance to the overt liberalisation of

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the sustainable development, have embraced many of its tenets, knowingly or unknowingly. And some, as the conversations late in Chapter 5 illustrated, recognize that not all what comes from advanced liberalism is necessarily an 'evil'.

Summarizing the rationalities contained in the problems and the solutions the AP-RCEM were highlighting yields some interesting findings. It is difficult to divide the problem formulations cleanly by distinct and pure rationalities (sovereign, liberal and liberation), because the problems are not always clearly allocated to one or the other rationality (although some are). For instance, a rampant private sector that exploits workers and destroys the environment could be seen as neoliberal. But the fact that the private sector is running rampant can be related to lack of enforcement of laws and regulations at the national level. Similarly, if the CSOs criticize Agenda 2030 for allowing too much focus on corporates, whilst not taking into account small and medium enterprises, social enterprises or smallholder types of economy, it may well be due to a preoccupation by member states that are pushing for a greater involvement of the private sector. In the case of traditional donor countries this could be to generate exports or technology to bolster national economic growth; and in the case of 'recipient' countries this could be due to a strong wish for more foreign direct investment, job creation, as part of overall government policy, or indeed corruption. It means that actors and their rationalities are co-dependent to some degree and that this should be recognised in governance solutions to increase action on the 2030 Agenda, i.e. that proposals should recognize the distinct and non-interchangeable roles that sovereign, corporate and people power plays.

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One additional finding of this research was that the different rationalities and types of government one can identify in the 'field' are hardly clear-cut textbook examples, but are a result of merging and contesting discourses in a given context. Therefore, analytical frameworks like governmentality and the extensions, as those suggested by Fletcher (2017) are helpful, but may not be enough. In this specific case, the research argued that sustainable development is a product of (and hinges on) the liberal world order and that neo-liberal rationalities and techniques to govern towards sustainability are strongly represented in the SDGs. This however does not assume that neoliberal techniques would automatically be counterproductive in bringing about a more transformative change from unsustainability, as the techniques embedded in the SDGs such as voluntarism, inclusiveness, could well be quite effective in allowing the sustainable development space to facilitate access of radical and critical voices to ultimately effectuate a transformative change from business as usual.

We therefore realize that no forms of government are 'pure'; they often mix and mesh depending on a dominant discourse. The conceptual coordinate system below (Figure 8) illustrates that different techniques can be applied with different intended outcomes. That means for the SDGs, research found that that framework is influenced by and proposes various advanced liberal and even neoliberal techniques of governing, but that their intended effect can be in support of sovereign or even liberation rationalities, i.e. outcomes. Thinking about governmentality in this way can take it from a theoretical lens towards more practical application; although perhaps making recommendations based on a Foucauldian analysis would make Foucault himself turn in his grave.

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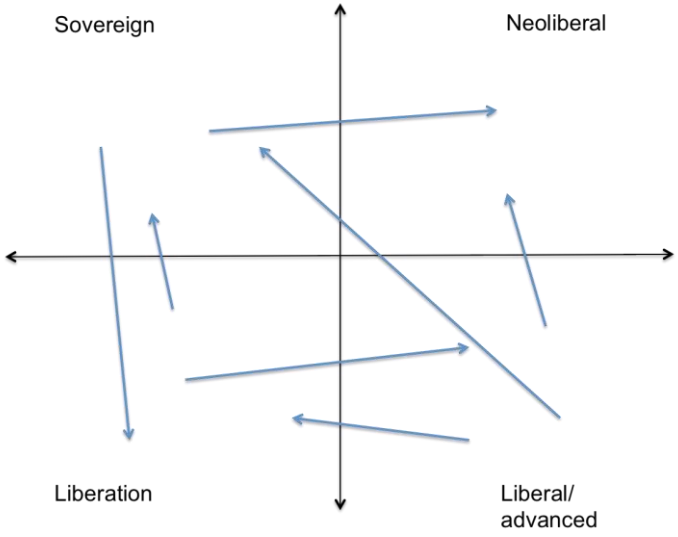
Figure 8: Interplay Between Techniques and Rationalities of Governing



Therefore, when using a governmentality framework for analysis of different types of governing, rather than focusing on identifying only what type it is, it would be more practical and instructive to ask the questions (i) what type of technique(s) is proposed?; and (ii) what is the desired outcome or effect, as illustrated here:

Figure 9: Techniques of Governing and their Effects

6.2. Contributions of the Research

The research has contributed to the growing literature on governmentality to provide an alternative to the mostly structural approaches to analyze the politics of governance in the area of sustainable development. Using a post-structural analytical lens has been useful and helpful because it forced the researcher to try to distance his gaze from the existing and competing structures to analyze the

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power and politics that flow between actors. In addition, it tested Fletcher's (2010, 2017) analytical lens of the 'sovereign', 'liberal', and 'liberation' types of governmentalities, and found that while it was a helpful framework for analysis, 'pure' liberation types of governmentality are unlikely to exist except for brief periods of time. The AP-RCEM still has it in moments, but as it is becoming increasingly accepted into the engagement system of the UN, it is also losing its 'liberation' edge with people increasingly being preoccupied with 'getting their language in' rather than resisting, or protesting against any lack of action from the governments. In that sense, they are already playing by the rules set by the established and powerful institutions. Even though the AP-RCEM has indeed made positive impacts with other regions following suit with similar engagement mechanisms, and based on the AP-RCEM approach, perhaps the AP-RCEM has already done what was feasible, because deepening the engagement would require falling back on the power of knowledge, and capacity (resources) which mostly only few well-established individuals and organizations already possess. And that is part of the game they were trying to resist.

At the same time, through showing how a post structural analytical framework can be combined with more participatory methods, the research has shown how, compared to the dominant literature and policy research on governance in the field of international sustainable development governance, new research could benefit from adopting post structural approaches to inquire and, especially, formulate recommendations. I'm writing this reflecting on my own career as a policy researcher, and having seen how research has often (uncritically) adopted and promoted advanced liberal and, in some cases, even neoliberal techniques of

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governing to solve the problems caused by the neoliberal system itself without recognizing the inherent structural inertia (or limitations) of the approach. We may think then that the transformative potential of such posed 'solutions'; may be questionable. And the same goes for parts of the UN system, which seemingly has also embraced advanced liberal and neoliberal rationalities and governance techniques to advocate for greater action on sustainable development. These platforms and organizations could also benefit from, in their own advocacy and policy recommendations, a more careful assessment of the power of existing structures, rather than jumping on bandwagons where funding may be most likely to emerge.

6.3. Future Directions

This research found that the entire dynamics around how the SDGs should be inclusive and allow for diverging, 'radical' points of view are important to understand. However, since there is no clearly 'black' or clearly 'white' practices but just shades of gray, it would be useful for future research to examine how exactly the dynamism of bottom-up initiatives can maintain while interacting with established powerhouses (such as governments and the UN). After all, bottom-up initiatives like the AP-RCEM require a level of organization, capacity, management and funding. But how such can be achieved and nurtured whilst maintaining nimbleness and independence is a question to be approached in greater depth and in other sectors than just for the case of this research that attempted to record and understand the AP-RCEM's work in Asia and the Pacific.

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Additionally, much of the sustainability science literature that focuses on how the SDGs can be accelerated and regression avoided seems to promote either sovereign or liberal types of government Much less literature focuses on the importance of rights, justice and equality. This may be because the liberation rationalities and its advocates are critical of the establishment and are often labeled as Marxists and "anti-development" (to use a quote from an AP-RCEM's statement). Calls for integration in scientific and policy-oriented literature perhaps need to also integrate different types of governing in their analyses and proposed solutions. Proposals could benefit from openly addressing the 'elephants in the room' and suggest ways in which technological, rights-based, liberal, as well as liberation types of rationalities and interests can be reflected especially at national and subnational levels where action really matters and where accountability exists, otherwise the 2030 Agenda is likely to increasingly become coerced by the already powerful neo-liberalization of development and will not be as transformative as its architects perhaps intended.

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Annex 1. Forms of Government in The Future We Want

Types of Government Highlighted in TFWW		
Sovereign/disciplinary	**Advanced Liberal (market, international)**	**Liberation/radical**
• …reaffirm that to achieve our sustainable development goals we need institutions at all levels that are effective, transparent, accountable and democratic. • …recognize the need to accelerate progress in closing development gaps between developed and developing countries, and to seize and create opportunities to achieve sustainable development through economic growth and diversification, social development and environmental protection. • …this shall not be construed as authorizing or encouraging any action against the territorial	• …recognize that … promoting sustainable patterns of consumption and production and protecting and managing the natural resource base of economic and social development are the overarching objectives of and essential requirements for sustainable development. • sustainable management of natural resources and ecosystems • … guided by the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, with full respect for international law and its principles. • …reaffirm the importance of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as well as other international instruments relating to human rights and international law. • determination to address … a green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication, and the institutional framework for sustainable development. • …can only be achieved with a broad alliance of people, governments, civil society and the private sector, all working together to secure the future we want for present and future generations. • need for an enabling environment…continued and strengthened international cooperation, particularly in the	• …reaffirm the importance of freedom, peace and security, respect for all human rights, including the right to development and the right to an adequate standard of living, including the right to food, the rule of law, gender equality, the empowerment of women and the overall commitment to just and democratic societies for development. • …recognize the diversification of actors and stakeholders engaged in the pursuit of sustainable development. In this context, we affirm the continued need for the full and effective participation of all countries, in particular developing countries, in global decision-

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Types of Government Highlighted in TFWW		
Sovereign/disciplinary	**Advanced Liberal (market, international)**	**Liberation/radical**
integrity or political independence of any State. • …each country faces specific challenges to achieve sustainable development… • …each country can choose an appropriate approach in accordance with national sustainable development plans, strategies and priorities. • In the promotion of partnerships, "… governments should support initiatives for sustainable development, including promoting the contribution of the private sector to support green economy policies..." • We invite governments, as appropriate, to create enabling frameworks that foster environmentally sound technology…	areas of finance, debt, trade and technology transfer, as mutually agreed, and innovation, entrepreneurship, capacity-building, transparency and accountability. • States are strongly urged to refrain from promulgating and applying any unilateral economic, financial or trade measures • We recognize that many people, especially the poor, depend directly on ecosystems for their livelihoods, their economic, social and physical well-being, and their cultural heritage. • … Istanbul Programme of Action…defines a framework for renewed and strengthened global partnership. • …recognize the need for broader measures of progress to complement gross domestic product… • … support national regulatory and policy frameworks that enable business and industry to advance sustainable development initiatives, taking into account the importance of corporate social responsibility. We call on the private sector to engage in responsible business practices, such as those promoted by UN Global Compact. • …encourage companies, where appropriate … to consider integrating sustainability information into their reporting cycle. • …develop models for best practice and facilitate action for the integration of sustainability reporting, • … we consider green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication as one of the important tools available for achieving sustainable development and that it could provide options for policymaking but should not	making. • in conformity with international law, to remove the obstacles to the full realization of the right of self-determination of peoples living under colonial and foreign occupation, which continue to adversely affect their economic and social development as well as their environment, are incompatible with the dignity and worth of the human person and must be combated and eliminated. • CSO engagement is important, because it is … essential to work towards improved access to information and communications technology, especially broadband networks and services, and bridge the digital divide, recognizing the contribution of international cooperation

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Types of Government Highlighted in TFWW		
Sovereign/disciplinary	**Advanced Liberal (market, international)**	**Liberation/radical**
• …underscore the need to ensure long-term political commitment … taking into account national circumstances and priorities… • Social protection systems that address and reduce inequality and social exclusion are essential for eradicating poverty.. • need to enhance sustainable livestock production systems, including through improving pasture land and irrigation schemes in line with national policies, legislation, rules and regulations, • recognize the key role that ecosystems play in maintaining water quantity and quality and support actions within respective national boundaries to protect and	be a rigid set of rules. • Green economy should ….not constitute a means of arbitrary or unjustifiable discrimination or a disguised restriction on international trade, avoid unilateral actions to deal with environmental challenges outside the jurisdiction of the importing country… • …acknowledge that a mix of measures, including regulatory, voluntary and others applied at the national level and consistent with obligations under international agreements, could promote green economy… • green economy … will enhance our ability to manage natural resources sustainably and with lower negative environmental impacts, increase resource efficiency and reduce waste. • …The institutional framework for sustainable development should integrate the three dimensions of sustainable development in a balanced manner and enhance implementation by, inter alia, strengthening coherence, coordination, avoiding duplication of efforts and reviewing progress in implementing sustainable development. • Promote the science-policy interface through inclusive, evidence-based and transparent scientific assessments, as well as access to reliable, relevant and timely data in areas related to the three dimensions of sustainable development, • Promote the review and stocktaking of progress in the implementation of all sustainable development commitments…	in this regard. • …emphasize that sustainable development must be inclusive and people-centred, benefiting and involving all people, including youth and children. • …commitments to ensure women's equal rights, access and opportunities for participation and leadership in the economy, society and political decision-making. • …"Mother Earth" is a common expression in a number of countries and regions, and we note that some countries recognize the rights of nature in the context of the promotion of sustainable development. • …agree to work more closely with the major groups and other stakeholders and encourage their active participation, as appropriate, in processes that contribute

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Types of Government Highlighted in TFWW		
Sovereign/disciplinary	**Advanced Liberal (market, international)**	**Liberation/radical**
sustainably manage these ecosystems. • We urge governments to create enabling environments that facilitate public and private sector investment in relevant and needed cleaner energy technologies. • recognize the importance of promoting incentives in favour of, and removing disincentives to, energy efficiency and the diversification of the energy mix, • encourage the promotion of investment in sustainable tourism, including eco-tourism and cultural tourism, … underline the importance of establishing, where necessary, appropriate guidelines and regulations in accordance with	• Promote the sharing of best practices and experiences relating to the implementation of sustainable development and, on a voluntary basis, facilitate sharing of experiences, including successes, challenges and lessons learned. • ...urge these institutions to prioritize sustainable development through, inter alia, more efficient and effective capacity-building, development and implementation of regional agreements and arrangements as appropriate, and exchange of information, best practices and lessons learned. • We recognize that goals, targets and indicators, including where appropriate gender-sensitive indicators, are valuable in measuring and accelerating progress. We further note that progress in the implementation of the actions stipulated below can be enhanced by voluntarily sharing information, knowledge and experience. • …resolve to increase sustainable agricultural production and productivity globally, including through improving the functioning of markets and trading systems and strengthening international cooperation, particularly for developing countries... • …urge governments to create enabling environments that facilitate public and private sector investment in relevant and needed cleaner energy technologies. • …recognize the importance of promoting incentives in favour of, and removing disincentives to, energy efficiency and the diversification of the energy mix… • …recognize the need to support sustainable tourism activities	to decision-making, planning and implementation of policies and programmes for sustainable development at all levels. • …respecting non-market approaches that contribute to the eradication of poverty. • …importance of broadening and strengthening the participation of developing countries in international economic decision-making and norm- setting… • …encourage action at the regional, national, subnational and local levels to promote access to information, public participation and access to justice in environmental matters, as appropriate. • …emphasize the need to accord the highest priority to poverty eradication within the United Nations development agenda,

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Types of Government Highlighted in TFWW		
Sovereign/disciplinary	**Advanced Liberal (market, international)**	**Liberation/radical**
national priorities and legislation for promoting and supporting sustainable tourism. • …to eliminate subsidies that contribute to illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing… • …call for the development and enforcement of comprehensive national and local waste management policies, strategies, laws and regulations. • …acknowledge that countries have the sovereign right to develop their mineral resources according to their national priorities and responsibility • importance of strong and effective legal and regulatory frameworks, policies and practices for the mining sector	and relevant capacity- building that promote environmental awareness… • …encourage the promotion of investment in sustainable tourism, including eco-tourism and cultural tourism... underline the importance of establishing, where necessary, appropriate guidelines and regulations in accordance with national priorities and legislation for promoting and supporting sustainable tourism. • …encourage the private sector to contribute to decent work for all and job creation for both women and men, and particularly for young people, including through partnerships with small and medium-sized enterprises and cooperatives. • …call for increased efforts to strengthen forest governance frameworks and means of implementation, in accordance with the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests, in order to achieve sustainable forest management. To this end, we commit to improving the livelihoods of people and communities by creating the conditions needed for them to sustainably manage forests, including through strengthening cooperation arrangements in the areas of finance, trade, transfer of environmentally sound technologies, capacity-building and governance, as well as by promoting secure land tenure, particularly decision-making and benefit-sharing, in accordance with national legislation and priorities. • …importance of integrating sustainable forest management objectives and practices into the mainstream of economic	addressing the root causes and challenges of poverty. • …reaffirm our commitments regarding the right of everyone to have access to safe, sufficient and nutritious food, consistent with the right to adequate food and the fundamental right of everyone to be free from hunger. • …reaffirm our commitments regarding the human right to safe drinking water and sanitation, to be progressively realized for our populations with full respect for national sovereignty. • …recognize the key role that ecosystems play in maintaining water quantity and quality and support actions within respective national boundaries to protect and sustainably manage these ecosystems. • …commit to promote

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Types of Government Highlighted in TFWW		
Sovereign/disciplinary	**Advanced Liberal (market, international)**	**Liberation/radical**
• …call on governments and businesses to promote the continuous improvement of accountability and transparency, as well as the effectiveness of the relevant existing mechanisms to prevent the illicit financial flows from mining activities. • …commit to actively promote the collection, analysis and use of gender- sensitive indicators and sex-disaggregated data in policy, programme design and monitoring frameworks, in accordance with national circumstances and capacities, • sustainable development goals should be … taking into account different national realities, capacities and levels of	policy and decision- making, • …recognize that the traditional knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous peoples and local communities make an important contribution to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, and their wider application can support social well-being and sustainable livelihoods. • … cooperation through the sharing of climate and weather information. • …call for continued, new and innovative public-private partnerships among industry, governments, academia and other non-governmental stakeholders aiming to enhance capacity and technology for environmentally sound chemicals and waste management, including for waste prevention • …encourage, inter alia, life cycle assessment, public information, extended producer responsibility, research and development, sustainable design and knowledge-sharing, as appropriate. • …invite others to consider rationalizing inefficient fossil fuel subsidies by removing market distortions, including restructuring taxation and phasing out harmful subsidies… • …commit to actively promote the collection, analysis and use of gender- sensitive indicators and sex-disaggregated data in policy, programme design and monitoring frameworks, in accordance with national circumstances and capacities, • sustainable development goals should be action- oriented, concise and easy to communicate, limited in number,	sustainable development policies that support inclusive housing and social services; a safe and healthy living environment for all, particularly children, youth, women and the elderly and disabled; affordable and sustainable transport… • …sustainable urban planning benefits from the involvement of multiple stakeholders as well as from full use of information and sex-disaggregated data, including on demographic trends, income distribution and informal settlements. • …recognize the importance of universal health coverage to enhancing health, social cohesion and sustainable human and economic development. • …call upon States to promote and protect effectively the human rights and

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Types of Government Highlighted in TFWW		
Sovereign/disciplinary	**Advanced Liberal (market, international)**	**Liberation/radical**
development and respecting national policies and priorities. • …welcome the ongoing negotiating process on a global legally binding instrument on mercury • …progress towards the achievement of the goals needs to be assessed and accompanied by targets and indicators, while taking into account different national circumstances, capacities and levels of development. • each country has primary responsibility for its own economic and social development and that the role of national policies, domestic resources and development strategies cannot be overemphasized. • We should also bear in	aspirational, global in nature and universally applicable to all countries while taking into account different national realities, capacities and levels of development and respecting national policies and priorities. • progress towards the achievement of the goals needs to be assessed and accompanied by targets and indicators, while taking into account different national circumstances, capacities and levels of development. • New partnerships and innovative sources of financing can play a role in complementing sources of financing for sustainable development. We encourage their further exploration and use, alongside the traditional means. • In order to foster private sector development, we shall continue to pursue appropriate national policy and regulatory frameworks in a manner consistent with national laws to encourage public and private initiatives, including at the local level, to foster a dynamic and well-functioning business sector, and to facilitate entrepreneurship and innovation, including among women, the poor and the vulnerable. • …reiterate the importance of human resource development, including training, the exchange of experiences and expertise, knowledge transfer and technical assistance for capacity-building, which involves strengthening institutional capacity, including planning, management and monitoring capacities. • international trade is an engine for development and sustained economic growth, and also reaffirm the critical role	fundamental freedom of all migrants regardless of migration status… • …reaffirm our commitments to the right to education and in this regard, we commit to strengthen international cooperation to achieve universal access to primary education, particularly for developing countries. • …stress the need for ensuring equal access to education for persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, local communities, ethnic minorities and people living in rural areas. • …resolve to unlock the potential of women as drivers of sustainable development, including through the repeal of discriminatory laws and the removal of formal barriers, ensuring equal access to justice and legal support

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Types of Government Highlighted in TFWW		
Sovereign/disciplinary	**Advanced Liberal (market, international)**	**Liberation/radical**
mind that there is no one-size-fits-all formula that will guarantee development effectiveness. The specific situation of each country needs to be fully considered. • corruption is a serious barrier to effective resource mobilization and allocation	that a universal, rules-based, open, non-discriminatory and equitable multilateral trading system, as well as meaningful trade liberalization, can play in stimulating economic growth and development worldwide, thereby benefiting all countries at all stages of development, as they advance towards sustainable development.	• …resolve to undertake legislative and administrative reforms to give women equal rights with men to economic resources, including access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, credit, inheritance, natural resources and appropriate new technology.

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Annex 2. Forms of Government Promoted by Agenda 2030

Types of Government Highlighted in the 2030 Agenda		
Sovereign/disciplinary	**Advanced Liberal (market, international)**	**Liberation/radical**
• …respecting national policies and priorities every State has, and shall freely exercise, full permanent sovereignty over all its wealth, natural resources and economic activity. • We will respect national policy space for sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, in particular for developing States, while remaining consistent with relevant international rules and commitments. • ODA should be used to catalyze additional resource mobilization from other sources (public and private). • …the essential role of national parliaments through their enactment of legislation and adoption of budgets and their role in	• sustainably managing its natural resources which can bring huge gains to all countries and all parts of the world. • strengthen the productive capacities of least developed countries in all sectors, including through structural transformation. We will adopt policies which increase productive capacities, productivity and productive employment; • States are strongly urged to refrain from promulgating and applying any unilateral economic, financial or trade measures not in accordance with international law and the Charter of the United Nations • We pledge to foster intercultural understanding, tolerance, mutual respect and an ethic of global citizenship and shared responsibility. • The scale and ambition of the new Agenda requires a revitalized Global Partnership to ensure its implementation…. bringing together Governments, the private sector, civil society, the United Nations system and other actors and mobilizing all available resources. • We acknowledge the role of the diverse private sector, ranging from micro-enterprises to cooperatives to multinationals, and that of civil	• Sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth is essential for prosperity. This will only be possible if wealth is shared and income inequality is addressed. • …based on a spirit of strengthened global solidarity, focused in particular on the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable and with the participation of all countries, all stakeholders and all people. • reaffirm our commitment to international law • reaffirm the importance of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as well as other international instruments relating to human rights and international law. • significant increase in investments to close the gender gap • …to respect, protect and promote human rights and fundamental freedoms for all,

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Types of Government Highlighted in the 2030 Agenda		
Sovereign/disciplinary	**Advanced Liberal (market, international)**	**Liberation/radical**
ensuring accountability for the effective implementation of our commitments. • Targets are defined as aspirational and global, with each Government setting its own national targets guided by the global level of ambition but taking into account national circumstances. • Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws • Encourage official development assistance and financial flows, including foreign direct investment • Promote public procurement practices that are	society organizations and philanthropic organizations in the implementation of the new Agenda. • ODA should be used to catalyze additional resource mobilization from other sources (public and private). • Ensure significant mobilization of resources from a variety of sources, including through enhanced development cooperation, • Increase investment, including through enhanced international cooperation, • Correct and prevent trade restrictions and distortions in world agricultural markets, including through the parallel elimination of all forms of agricultural export subsidies and all export measures with equivalent effect • ensure the proper functioning of food commodity markets • information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women • enhance international cooperation to facilitate access to clean energy research and technology, • devise and implement policies to promote sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products • Increase Aid for Trade support for developing	• social and economic development depends on the sustainable management of our planet's natural resources. • …gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls will make a crucial contribution • significant increase in investments to close the gender gap • Quality, accessible, timely and reliable disaggregated data will be needed to help with the measurement of progress and to ensure that no one is left behind. Such data is key to decision-making • Support and strengthen the participation of local communities in improving water and sanitation management • Create sound policy frameworks at the national, regional and international levels, based on pro-poor and gender-sensitive development strategies, to support accelerated investment in poverty eradication actions • Sustained, inclusive and sustainable

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Types of Government Highlighted in the 2030 Agenda		
Sovereign/disciplinary	**Advanced Liberal (market, international)**	**Liberation/radical**
sustainable, in accordance with national policies and priorities • Rationalize inefficient fossil-fuel subsidies that encourage wasteful consumption by removing market distortions, in accordance with national circumstances, including by restructuring taxation and phasing out those harmful subsidies • …effectively regulate harvesting and end overfishing, illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and destructive fishing practices • …conserve at least 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas, consistent with national and international law • …prohibit certain forms of fisheries subsidies which contribute to overcapacity	countries • Facilitate sustainable and resilient infrastructure development in developing countries through enhanced financial, technological and technical support • industrial diversification and value addition to commodities • Encourage official development assistance and financial flows, including foreign direct investment • reduce to less than 3 per cent the transaction costs of migrant remittances and eliminate remittance corridors with costs higher than 5 per cent • By 2030, ensure that people everywhere have the relevant information and awareness for sustainable development and lifestyles in harmony with nature • Support developing countries to strengthen their scientific and technological capacity to move towards more sustainable • Develop and implement tools to monitor sustainable development impacts for sustainable tourism • Rationalize inefficient fossil-fuel subsidies that encourage wasteful consumption by removing market distortions, in accordance with national circumstances, including by restructuring taxation and phasing out those harmful subsidies	economic growth is essential for prosperity. This will only be possible if wealth is shared and income inequality is addressed. • Improve the regulation and monitoring of global financial markets and institutions and strengthen the implementation of such regulations • recognizes the need to build peaceful, just and inclusive societies that provide equal access to justice and that are based on respect for human rights (including the right to development), • We acknowledge the role of the diverse private sector, ranging from micro-enterprises to cooperatives to multinationals, and that of civil society organizations and philanthropic organizations in the implementation of the new Agenda. • Broadening and strengthening the voice and participation of developing countries… in international economic decision-

CQU eTD Collection

Types of Government Highlighted in the 2030 Agenda		
Sovereign/disciplinary	**Advanced Liberal (market, international)**	**Liberation/radical**
and overfishing • Take urgent action to end poaching and trafficking of protected species of flora and fauna • …reduce illicit financial and arms flows, strengthen the recovery and return of stolen assets and combat all forms of organized crime • Substantially reduce corruption and bribery in all their forms • …improve domestic capacity for tax and other revenue collection • Developed countries to implement fully their official development assistance commitments • Respect each country's policy space and leadership • …public policies and the mobilization and effective use of domestic resources, underscored by the principle of national ownership, are	• Improve education, awareness-raising and human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning • sustainably manage and protect marine and coastal ecosystems • By 2030, increase the economic benefits to small island developing States and least developed countries from the sustainable use of marine resources • Provide access for small-scale artisanal fishers to marine resources and markets • conservation and sustainable use of oceans and their resources by implementing international law as reflected in the United Nations Convention • ensure the conservation, restoration and sustainable use of terrestrial and inland freshwater ecosystems and their services, • promote the implementation of sustainable management of all types of forests • integrate ecosystem and biodiversity values into national and local planning, development processes, poverty reduction strategies and accounts • Adopt and implement investment promotion regimes for least developed countries	making • …developing broader measures of progress to complement gross domestic product. • …equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to basic services, ownership and control over land and other forms of property, inheritance, natural resources, • Promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all • Enhance global macroeconomic stability, including through policy coordination and policy coherence; and enhance policy coherence for sustainable development • …Create sound policy frameworks at the national, regional and international levels, based on pro-poor and gender-sensitive development strategies, to support accelerated investment in poverty eradication actions • …Correct and prevent trade restrictions and distortions in

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Types of Government Highlighted in the 2030 Agenda		
Sovereign/disciplinary	**Advanced Liberal (market, international)**	**Liberation/radical**
central to our common pursuit of sustainable development, • national ownership is key to achieving sustainable development, • …data which is high-quality, accessible, timely, reliable and disaggregated by income, sex, age, race, ethnicity, migration status, disability and geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts.	• Enhance North-South, South-South and triangular regional and international cooperation on and access to science, technology and innovation and enhance knowledge sharing on mutually agreed terms • Promote the development, transfer, dissemination and diffusion of environmentally sound technologies to developing countries on favourable terms • Enhance the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development, complemented by multi-stakeholder partnerships that mobilize and share knowledge, expertise, technology and financial resources • Encourage and promote effective public, public-private and civil society partnerships, building on the experience and resourcing strategies of partnerships • The revitalized Global Partnership will facilitate an intensive global engagement in support of implementation of all the Goals and targets, bringing together Governments, civil society, the private sector, the United Nations system and other actors and mobilizing all available resources. • national development efforts need to be supported by an enabling international economic environment, including coherent and mutually	world agricultural markets, including through the parallel elimination of all forms of agricultural export subsidies and all export measures with equivalent effect • Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws • Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women • …Support and strengthen the participation of local communities in improving water and sanitation management • …devise and implement policies to promote sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products • Promote fair and equitable sharing

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Types of Government Highlighted in the 2030 Agenda		
Sovereign/disciplinary	**Advanced Liberal (market, international)**	**Liberation/radical**
	supporting world trade, monetary and financial systems, and strengthened and enhanced global economic governance. • We recognize that domestic resources are first and foremost generated by economic growth, supported by an enabling environment at all levels. • International trade is an engine for inclusive economic growth and poverty reduction, and contributes to the promotion of sustainable development. • We attach great importance to providing trade-related capacity-building for developing countries	of the benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources • …increase significantly the availability of high-quality, timely and reliable data disaggregated by income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts • develop measurements of progress on sustainable development that complement gross domestic product • The Agends will be people-centred, gender-sensitive, respect human rights and have a particular focus on the poorest, most vulnerable and those furthest behind. • …data which is high-quality, accessible, timely, reliable and disaggregated by income, sex, age, race, ethnicity, migration status, disability and geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts.

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Types of Government Highlighted in the 2030 Agenda		
Sovereign/disciplinary	**Advanced Liberal (market, international)**	**Liberation/radical**

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Annex 3. Forms of Government in ESCAP's Regional Roadmap

Types of Government Highlighted in ESCAP's Regional Roadmap		
Sovereign/disciplinary	**Advanced Liberal (market, international)**	**Liberation/radical**
• Expected impacts of the roadmap are: (a) strengthened regional cooperation on priority issues as identified by member States; (b) continued and more efficient and coordinated support for member States provided by the secretariat, United Nations funds, programmes and specialized agencies and regional organizations through the Asia-Pacific Regional Coordination Mechanism; and (c) more effective knowledge-sharing among countries. • National statistical systems therefore need to be strengthened to supply the statistical evidence necessary for monitoring of progress, integrated policy analysis and effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda. ←comment: Capacity strengthening implied to happen through 'international experts'.	• Regional economic cooperation and integration will facilitate better transport, energy and ICT connectivity which in turn will increase access to services such as education, health, and housing as well as electricity and markets for marginalized populations. ← these are then referred to as opportunities in the subsequent paragraph. Interesting rhetoric • Priority actions under the means of implementation for the 2030 Agenda are also identified in the road map, including data and statistics, technology, finance, policy coherence and partnerships. ← nothing about rule of law or compliance. • promoting sustainable development in Asia Pacific is the most pervasive and lasting solution for meeting today's challenges and delivering durable peace and stability in our region, this road map recognizes that sustainable development must be underpinned by peaceful and inclusive societies, and also places gender equality and women's economic	• In addition to challenges posted by poverty, inequality is also rising in the region and threatens to disrupt efforts to achieve the 2030 Agenda. ESCAP research indicates that income inequality as well as inequality for opportunities is either on the rise or still very high without signs of improvement in most of the countries in the region. The road map responds by placing the elimination of inequality at the center of the region's development path. • Quality of governance and the effectiveness of public institutions are also crucial for the successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda… a principle means to enable voices of people and participation in an effective, transparent and results oriented decision-making process. Effective governance allows people to be the driving force for sustainable development. As recent ESCAP research shows, governance also affects the capacity of an economy to gain access and manage better human and

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Types of Government Highlighted in ESCAP's Regional Roadmap		
Sovereign/disciplinary	**Advanced Liberal (market, international)**	**Liberation/radical**
	empowerment as a central issue in the regional policy agenda. • It will also strengthen support to Member States in their efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda in an integrated approach, inter alia, with analytical products, technical services and capacity-building initiatives through knowledge- sharing products and platforms. ← a promotion of escap's services. • Effective use of financing for development, trade, science, technology and innovation (STI) and data and statistics will define the success of SDGs implementation. ← nothing about laws, all about biopower and 'what ESCAP has to offer'. • Trade has considerable potential to boost implementation of SDGs, but there are still challenges to fully harness this potential; the road map identifies specific areas of work that can tackle obstacles and create opportunities. • With regard to data and statistics, without credible figures and indicators it will be impossible to review progress on SDG	natural resources, improve investment prospects and sustain innovation. • The road map also aims to place gender equality and women's empowerment as a central issue of the regional policy agenda. • Data and statistics should also be able to ensure that no one is left behind, and disaggregated data should be made more available as required by the Sustainable Development Goal indicators. • On the financial inclusion side, more than 1.1 billion people in the Asia-Pacific region are unbanked." • Policy coherence is mentioned as one important factor for successfully implementing the SDGs. → but it is brought into connection with the need to sustain growth and enhance resilience and requires regional cooperation to overcome 'first mover' risk in terms of 'short term economic competitiveness'. Although regional cooperation would arguably be crucial in terms of getting to a concerted approach that can allow for policy coherence without having one or a

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Types of Government Highlighted in ESCAP's Regional Roadmap		
Sovereign/disciplinary	**Advanced Liberal (market, international)**	**Liberation/radical**
	implementation and, consequently, improve performance. • it acknowledges the importance of the regional and subregional dimensions, regional economic integration and interconnectivity in sustainable development ← how would a regional body like ESCAP ever advocate strongly for radical or sovereign forms of government, when its entire reason d'etre is a subjectivity to perform the regional dimension to the extent this is sanctioned by governments. So even if the regional dimension is very 'light' as for instance for the ASEAN, it will be highlighted, and things such as regional trade liberalization could not possibly be opposed by ESCAP even it de-facto puts some countries at massive disadvantage and lets some businesses carry out transfer pricing etc. • The means of implementation – namely finance, technology, capacity-building, trade and systemic issues – are key to implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.	few countries gaining short term economic advantage over other more ambitious countries in terms of sustainable development. • Thematic issues such concerning 'leaving no-one behind' and social development. • Promote analytical studies and policy advocacy to address inequalities, reduce poverty and enhance social protection, including for persons with disabilities, to build socioeconomic resilience. • gPromote multistakeholder engagement (as appropriate); •

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Types of Government Highlighted in ESCAP's Regional Roadmap		
Sovereign/disciplinary	**Advanced Liberal (market, international)**	**Liberation/radical**
	• Promote financial inclusion ← what does this even mean? How half-hearted does the term promote sound in the context of financial inclusion? • Mobilise support from other sources, agencies, funds and programmes (ESCAP setting itself up as key facilitating body for implementing this roadmap) •	

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Annex 4. Forms of Government in AP-RCEM's Statements

Problems emphasized (not specific to rationality)		
• Militarization/military spending • Lack of financing • Omission of 'elephant-in-the-room' issues • Widening inequalities • Lack of tax generating opportunities and capacities • Critical development areas are facing budget cuts • Lack of access to basic infrastructure and basic social services in urban areas • ODA leverages private sector funding • Lack of enforcement of existing laws and regulations to be pro-development • Fossil fuels lock-in • ODA not a donation but a repayment of due • Geo-engineering	• Illicit capital flows • Lack of corporate accountability • Unequal trade-rules • Too much emphasis on corporates • Macroeconomic liberalization • Extractive industries destroying environment and society • Production processes impact environment • Trade agreements minimize policy space • PPPs generate public debt • Corporate capture of the Agenda • Over exploitation of fossil fuels, minerals • Focus on partnerships creates withdrawal of governments' responsibility • Ecosystem-services approach flawed	• Lack of access to S&T • Lack of justice for marginalized peoples • Structural injustices • Shrinking CSO space • ODA commitments not honoured • Lack of access to technology • Structural exclusion and criminalization of marginalized peoples • Elite amass wealth at others' expense • Widening inequalities despite high growth • Lack of community control and ownership over land and resources • Oppression, intimidation, and threats to environmental defenders • Lack of community and traditional knowledge • Lop-sided focus on high-tech solutions
Solutions emphasized (specific to rationality)		
Sovereign	**Liberal**	**Liberation**
• Eliminate tax havens • Redirect military spending • Debt cancellation and restructuring • Strengthen corporate regulation	• Financial transaction taxes • Redirect military spending • Progressive taxation • International cooperation on taxation	• Support local capacity and innovation • Promote endogenous and traditional knowledge • Promote local employment (fishers,

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- Reform trade and investment rules
- Mandatory, transparent and accountable reporting mechanism for all goals for the corporate sector
- Raise public revenues by taxing corporations and high-net worth individuals
- Pro-poor and equitable economic and social policies
- Social services and sustainable livelihoods must be ensured by governments
- Governments should confront politically sensitive topics such as human rights infringements, land grabbing
- Govt's should be reminded that facilitating environmentally sound and socially just development is their primary responsibility, not accommodating corporatization
- ODA remains a major and crucial source for addressing systemic poverty and financing of the SDGs.
- Address the social determinants of health and to put in place programmes and policies which effectively address structural issues e.g. big pharmaceutical's control over

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- Debt cancellation and restructuring
- Strengthen corporate accountability
- Overcome IPR barriers (esp. to medicine)
- Reform trade and investment rules
- Innovative sources of financing
- Carbon taxes
- Regional cooperation to regulate the role of corporations
- Guarantee decent work not contractualisation and flexibilisation
- International (UN) mechanisms to protect the rights and freedoms of all
- Governments need to promote social and market entrepreneurship and enterprise development
- Investments need to focus on livelihood creation such as green jobs.
- Better distribution of wealth and a more just sharing of the fruits of production through, among others, collective bargaining agreements, cooperativism and social enterprises.
- Comprehensive programs to encourage youth into agricultural and fishery profession to ensure rapid local growth
- Institutionalise policy coherence at all levels that enable development justice
- Reinstatement and reclamation of the United Nations Declaration on the Right of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)

farmers)

- Address international financial governance and trade structures, reproductive health and rights
- Ensure participation of individuals, communities in M&E.
- Need Development Justice, dignity of all people;
- Redistribute economic, political, social and cultural power by guaranteeing that rights are respected.
- Inclusive representation in decision-making at all levels.
- Institutionalized space to civil society and beneficiaries of development
- Accountable, transparent, participatory and just institutions
- A bottom-up approach with participation of grass-root communities and civil society, with shared ownership by the people.
- Trade agreements subject to independent human rights and SDGs impact assessments.
- Financing strategies oriented to promote equity and human rights
- Demand recognition of indigenous, traditional, and local knowledge

medicine patents • Improving ocean health requires a strong commitment from governments. • Urge governments to...put in place enabling regulations to protect the right and access of fisherfolks, coastal and rural communities towards marine resources • Harmonizing laws and undertaking institutional reform • CSOs and governments together must spread more awareness about laws and rights of residents • Member states must ensure that energy transition takes care of equitable access to energy	• We must promote the ways in which people themselves are taking action • Community and social enterprises… provide many best practices … and offer much better solutions than profit- oriented corporations • Rethink markets • Hold big transnational corporations accountable under the "polluter pays" principle • Improve the position of vulnerable people as actors, experts and leaders through implementing capacity development • Regional Tax Forum • Scientific and traditional knowledge and information platforms	systems as vital component of diverse sources of knowledge • Respect and uphold human rights • Harmonization between the International Human rights system and the Sustainable Development Goals • Sustainability requires addressing structural root causes. • Total energy use reduction rather than focus on efficiency improvements • Need energy democracy and energy justice • Partnerships need to be on equal footing • Recognition and strengthening of traditional knowledge in policy-making and knowledge sharing and learning

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Annex 5. Forms of Government in Observations and Notes

Gov't	Experts and Academia	CSOs
15/06/2012 Rio+20 • Case for conflict between sovereign power and liberal/global governance during the discussions on upgrading UNEP. There were disagreements between proposals for UNEP to coordinate, provide oversight and guidance on the global MEAs. Some advocates wanted this, but other countries did not want to establish a hierarchical relationship where UNEP had that kind of centralized power over MEAs, should remain decentralized. (neolib). They eventually agreed on 'guidance' but not coordination and oversight. • On UNEP's role, there were discussions on the importance of providing capacity building and technology transfer as important parts. (what are those governing techniques); basically provide tools to empower countries to govern themselves, rather than a hierarchical approach; another	**UN Dec 15-16 2011 Rio+20 Prepcom:** • Oversight on SD can not really work with any other approach than 'carrot' approach (UN Specialist interview). • UN informally admits that they (individual staff) are restrained in what they can say and that their networks with more independent science and CSO groups are important to get messages out. Examples include alternatives to GDP or other more radical ideas, which are really supported from within the UN, but are prevented by Member States. • Generally experts were intrigued and occupied with the idea of universality and how to unpack it. A fear was that the donor accountability that was somewhat there with the MDGs would disappear with the SDGs, given its universal nature and the change in discourse to respect national sovereignty and development priorities, the flipside of that coin could be less accountability, because the new agenda would be less of a donor agenda and more a global agenda. • Research institutes were also interested in the concept of Planetary Boundaries and its potential significance for a Rio+20 outcome	**19/06/2012 Rio CSO (MG) briefing:** • Wanted intergenerational solidarity mentioned in the text • CSO capacity and participation should be subject to international law and national legislation, • The need for including structural issues (through the gender equality lens) was argued strongly. **OWG 3-7/2 2014 New York** • Need to take a HR framework approach for business accountability to guide private sector involvement. **OWG 12 16-20 June 2014** • The model on MOI is actually a vehicle for privatization, the word public is not really used in the zero draft. **APRCEM Coordination Meeting, Nov 12-13 2014:**

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important factor was to avoid overlap of roles with other existing programmes and agencies (mainly UNDP) • The EU complained about the draft outcome of TFWW being too focused on ODA (as MOI) and too focused on CBDR (do not want to commit to additional ODA, in line with CBDR for instance); the G77 representing developing countries thought there was lack of ambition regarding MOI • So there was a tension between continuing the donor recipient relationship and moving towards a voluntary type of governance where neoliberal techniques and self-governing were much more prominent. Therefore the outcome document was criticized for 'kicking the can down the road' except for the decisions around the SDGs; which were perceived as among the most attractive outcomes of Rio+20. • Human right to water should be in the text (liberation) (Bolivia) and on the SDGs, the process should be under the GA and not decided by a separate working group;	(which then never materialized really). **<u>14/06/2012 Rio side event, T. Jackson</u>** • Overshoot is also a question of fairness (T. Jackson) • Absolute decoupling (heroic but not possible) • New economics must sit within the current understanding of our current economics, otherwise we will not link up with it and it will never be mainstream; • The financial sector must be included in the model with economic and environmental base • No longer permissible to look at only economic growth to indicate the health of the economic system, when national balance sheets are slowly going under water. • **<u>2014 S11 workshop New York 1/02/2014</u>** • Global constitution on good governance (liberalism) building on Earth Charter. Is it liberalism or global citizenship? I think they would like something strong and binding, since it is theoretically possible, but not politically feasible, so these proposals for global governance get watered down to become just voluntary initiatives • Talking about governance to mean "widespread capacity for integrated decision making is achieved" so again it is about capacity.	• The aim of the RCEM is to promote stronger, coordinated, and more effective civil society contribution in regional and global UN processes. It aims to ensure stronger cross constituency2 coordination and ensure that voices of all sub-regions3 of Asia Pacific are heard in intergovernmental processes. • "It is an open, inclusive and flexible mechanism designed to reach the broadest number of CSOs, harness the voice of grassroots and peoples' movements to advance a more just, equitable and sustainable model of development. Moreover, it is a platform to share information and best practices and build capacities of CSOs for better and more effective engagement in the future." • CSOs have historically been reactive to the UN's agenda and invited to participate in it, through consultations and CSO

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• I guess the trouble was that there was no way to move on from the north-south relationship to something less hierarchic without moving to advanced (neo)liberal approaches • "This is not about groups this is about one earth (Kenya), we need something different and stronger as outcome of this conference (Kenya)" • Brazilian chair hard handed - now talking only about monitoring and since there is no agreement on monitoring, it WILL not be in the text. ← so essentially no accountability mechanisms. This was desired both by the northern countries and southern countries, since monitoring implies a strong power with potential sanctions, akin to disciplinary power. Nobody wanted anyone to monitor them, so the agreement instead was for 'follow-up and review' which is also the same language that characterizes the weak HLPF review mechanisms on the SDGs; • Actually the discussion and disagreements on IEG and making	• Strength of private sector is that it can work in many cultures globally and is not constrained to work in one country. • A goal on global partnerships must address inequality between countries • • OWG 3-7/2 2014 New York: • Fossil fuel subsidies, international transactions tax need to find a way into the conversation as these will be important for implementation in terms of finance (UNDP); • Access to information, freedom of expression, access to civic space etc are among important elements to be a part of a governance goal (Article 19) • Including democracy as goal in governance may be difficult, since different countries have their own understanding and version of democracy, thus using the adjective 'democratic' governance may be better (UNDP) **ISAP 2015:** • There is a need to link the discussion on the SDGs to economic development and poverty alleviation otherwise it won't resonate, needs to be about jobs and extra income otherwise we won't get our message across. • The SDGs should not be viewed as a conservation agenda but rather one of smart	fora preceding government meetings. RCEM's aim is to be a few steps ahead, setting agendas, rather than invited into them, with an ability to remain a critical and engaged outside voice. • Functions: "Inclusivity is important, and that must be balanced with maintenance of RCEM's critical voice. RCEM has a role as a watchdog, a critical voice where spaces are shrinking and where accountability is overlooked or lacking." • Cross scale subjectivity: "'RCEM aims to ensure that our regional (and global) engagements can contribute to national and local advocacies." • RCEM's identity as one of people and CSOs who subscribe to a revolutionary vision of development. • Limitations of prior engagement: "UNEP sets dates and the agenda for engagement, as well as the

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stronger environmental governance, where some countries (EU, Norway, Swiss) supported a specialized agency, whereas other (Juszcans) did not. The fear was on the surface a reluctance to agree on modalities that could mean increased budgetary contributions from developed countries for UNEP, but probably the real reason was a reluctance to strengthen environmental governance in such a way that it could compete more adequately with sovereign forms of power, relying instead on liberal ones. **<u>OWG meeting 3-7/02/2014</u>** • Discussions on how to measure not just commercial but 'living value' of something. • SDGs would promote importance of acting on environment issues and thus lower the cost of action. • In general during those OWGs observed, a lot of focus was on how to escape the 'silo' approach and take a more integrated approach. In a sense this was the right area to focus on, but operationalizing it by	development; need to balance environmental protection with economic development. • Countries were interested in using their technology, rebranded as contributive to the SDGs, but thereby boosting their own exports. It is all about business and economy. Wants to be seen as endorsing the SDGs, but really constrained by an economic growth discourse. This can be contested by opening up the IPRs so that other countries can access the technology without getting into problems around property rights. • Our current economic system runs on profit and runs on greed and short sightedness, and SD needs to go into our consciousness and it is a matter of ethics and not of economics. If we can't invest 4% then we have an ethical failing (Sachs) • "We need an ecosystem of partners" (Sachs) • Scientists (Kanie) already commented early on that integration would be a major challenge across ministries. That's nothing really new is it? • Still accounting by GDP, and not comfortable with natural capital for governments (Zakri) • Public awareness and education is almost sacrosanct today, it is super important (Zakri). • Honest view: "Private sector needs to be engaged, governments don't have any money"	invitee list; CSOs consequently worry about the space for genuine critique. Dependence on UNEP is high. Further, UNEP's Regional Consultation model leaves little room for meeting governments, as meetings are among CSOs only." • There have been suggestions that RCEM should not only be invited to fora but also participate in agenda setting with ESCAP. Has this actually ever happened to date? • For sure ESCAP opened up and began inviting CSOs to their expert meetings since 2014 it was initially suggested. This is a point of improvement. • Further, CSOs want[ed] a separate goal on Equality, and are critical that Climate Change was left out. • Some CSOs asked, Why is there still poverty? Why is there still hunger? Members of the group noted that the Sustainable Development Goals are only a

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giving the task to 'partnerships' may have risked a hijacking of the agenda by the neoliberal rationalities. • Equality is not a certain consequence of economic growth and this troika thus wants a strong goal on gender equality and targets that affect other goals and use of gender disaggregated data for targets and indicators in general; • New goal framework needs to anchored strongly in Human Rights Commitments. • Structural inequalities and discrimination need to be addressed centrally by the future development agenda (Argentina) • Governance is an enabler for development (South Africa) • EU is keeping quiet on governance. While they may support it they do not want to make it seem like a northern EU agenda point • Brazil: wrong to discuss role of law in the context of development (didn't want the paper jeopardized by pointing out an elephant in the room); how can rule of law be important for northern countries	• Science policy nexus: Role of indigenous and local knowledge must be addressed to assist in achieving the SDGs (Zakri) • Science should be apolitical and should not be constrained by national boundaries, but at the same time it should operate at various levels (interesting comment, how can science ever be completely apolitical, when different political realms take on different ontological and epistemological approaches that often conflict?) • Then he is contradicting himself by saying:" Science needs increasingly the buy-in of policy and the public and we need to work towards these criteria, we can establish scientific advisory panels at national level" **<u>UNOSD 2015:</u>** • In terms of risks it will be necessary to look to include concerns for drivers of political, social and cultural drivers of exclusion to avoid having this agenda becoming side-lined by major impact events outside of the immediacy of the sustainability circuit. • Gina – the UN is not going to implement this agenda, countries will (sovereign). • Past SD track (focusing on environmental issue) and separate MDG (development track) are now coming together of these two tracks • Discourse has shifted to security, so the SDGs	rehashing of the last 20 years of government's commitments - they are still unmet. Governments are continually given a 'life line' to restart their commitments again and again. They are not committing to anything new. • As for the preparatory processes on the SDGs, the CSOs thought that "CSO participation remains token, and CSOs are not yet recognized as a major stakeholders. Grassroots groups are missing. It is an exclusive process. • The goals need to address the linkage between economic growth and environmental conservation. Actions may be detrimental to the environment and development. The green economy does not address this. Governments have not adopted people's framings, and have prioritised business-friendly framing. • Shift the focus to a real and

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(India) ← turns out in the years that followed a need for stronger rule of law especially in northern countries who were getting fucked by the banks, seemed to gain relevance. • Rule of law and development are mutually reinforcing, and it should be mentioned in the SDGs therefore (Denmark) • Country specificity of the agenda is important (Bhutan) • Denmark: cooperation, inclusiveness, renewed global partnerships • Systemic issues were not addressed in the MDG, should be addressed (trade) in the SDGs • How to ensure accountability **IRF retreat** • Some countries emphazied the importance of ODA and for it to continue with the SDGs as well. Others were critical of it (we do not know their real reason de tre) but they said ODA perpetuates the north/south divide. • Wants to move beyond GDP growth as sole measure of progress (Paula), wants to include measure of	may no longer be so important; so challenge will be how to retain focus on SDGs at the highest level and ensure that the development that goes on does not exacerbate the risks to security. Biopower. • A driver is about people and not things. So a driver is not a business but about how people behave within any agenda and so important changes come from people in universities and in businesses. • (comment from myself): Ownership and identity politics are deeply interrelated. Intention of ownership is a governmentality, but narrative to create ownership gives rise to identity politics, which again are then hijacked for votes in a corrupt democratic system. So this is an interplay between neoliberal governmentality and sovereign power. • Cambodia had CMDGs, no problem, now jumping into the SDGs so need to go along with the global agenda [need to go along] for interests of donor money, so here the traditional north-south discourse still there. • Comment: It is pretty impossible to distinguish cleanly between governments and experts, because some governments are invited to expert meetings and speak as experts. • UNDP: Sense of ownership and empowerment of people that us created through this	critical engagement with the UN (ie exposing the lack of accountability of the IFIs and the UN system). **APFSD 2015:** • Dominant macroeconomic policies impeding realisation of human rights. • Wealth power and resources need greater equity, just institutions need to support this. **Berlin meeting 2-4 May 2015:** • Governments do not want to work with CSOs. Only where the optics need to be good CSOs can join panels. • Governments use lack of coordination to lock CSOs out. • RCEM call 19 June 2015: • RCEM RCC members discuss APFSD 2015, evaluating it. • Even RCEM propose speakers for the slots allocated to them, sometimes other speakers are handpicked from the top in the UN. Or even if the UN tries to be

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ecosystems contribution to human development. Proposes natural capital and that it need to be mentioned in the SDGs. • Japan, yes ODA important but given massive national deficits unlikely to increase ODA – so how to get private sector to do their share while putting in place mechanisms to monitor them? • ODA as catalytic role (i.e. aid for trade) • Systemic issues need to be tackled, crucial for SIDS (Caribbean) • the cooperation between Viet Nam and Denmark has now matured into commercial cooperation, which of course is not the case in Somalia • private sector should do what it does best, which is growth, so sense of realism is important here. • ODA needs to be catalytic rather than pure service delivery • Problem is that the success of the SDGs partially hinges on issues that are beyond the UN's remit (trade). • Recommend multistakeholder partnership at all levels, including regional, national and local. Need to	ownership. Only if you have access you will feel you have a stake → ownership is a governmentality. (comment: but the extent to which it is neoliberal or not depends on what responses governments take, whether the ownership is created solely through PR campaigns, or followed up by national legislation for actual implementation. • Malaysian example: having competitions nationally among schools on who can collect them most waste for instance; • It was discussed: Why do we need public awareness? Among others it was suggested that it is a moral imperative (people need to know what is being planned), a legal necessity (need access to information); and it provides a sense of ownership and empowerment of people. • Awareness campaigns must lead to national ownership that goes beyond government ownership. Governments keep coming and going, so there needs to be other segments of society to do something on it. (comment: it might mean that when governments are constrained for one reason or another, citizens need to be on board to help hold their governments to account. But the reality has shown that most people are easily manipulated or swayed to not care about sustainability, so the whole 'awareness' stance, while	progressive some member states push back which results in lesser space for CSOs. So there are opposing agendas here. • CSOs view the people's forum as capacity building exercise mainly, but advocacy is just as important in the eyes of the RCC, however that angle doesn't seem to come through as clearly. • The CSO statement was too long, it was not properly edited from us, so we need to be more strategic next time • Discussions on options for joint positions of RCEM, [it seems that the coordinating parties in the end have a stronger voice in the common statement than those who contribute from afar, like for example APWLD] **<u>RCEM meeting Oct 2015:</u>** • Development has to be the primary driver of trade and not the other way round. LDCs need favourable regulations for

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establish fora for stakeholders to discuss; cannot just be M&A, but rather include stocktaking and accelerating. Role of govt's to establish this forum, but recognize that they are not the only actors. • OWG 12 16-20 June 2014 • Poverty eradication is at the core of SD (China, Kazakhstan, Indonesia) • China: each government should set targets in their own context. • Disagreements about SDG 16, governance, should be integrated throughout the entire set of goals. • Chair: The product is not legally binding but is a framework for development; • CSOs that they have been accommodated but this openness should be respected as it is an intergovernmental process, mutual trust should be respected otherwise this space will disappear; this trust is necessary to keep group cohesion, cannot allow breach of trust Csaba • There was a lot of discussion around SDG 12 whether it should be a lone standing goal or its targets integrated.	theoretically useful, has not shown to have much impact at all). • (Ella) saying that even CSO participation is improving at regional levels, at national levels it is a very different picture. And the participation often is based on CSOs track record and experience, which leads to 'elite capture' where the strongest and most well-resourced CSOs get to participate. • "Lack of action has a lot to do with the politics of policy" • The discourse of the SDGs have much more to do with the connections between goals than the MDGs for instance, this may change the dynamics a lot • 90% of FDI flows back out of the developing country. What is the structural cause for this type of leakage? • if we implement the SDGs it is not just about costs but also about a lot of savings that can be made. This can be a politically salient point. • Most countries state that their existing goals are very much in line with the SDGs. It is strange, that means either that none of their goals in their plans are ever implemented, or it means that there is no need for SDGs or that we don't have any SD issues. Or it says something about political will. ← rebranding existing efforts • Experts generally tend to emphasise the	them. • There were proposals for committee on international taxation to combat illicit flows. • Remittances are increasing, used as substitute for other development finances. • Structural issues that are the cause for these problems are not addressed in the SDGs. We are only addressing symptoms, not causes. Access to land is a huge issue, • **5 Feb 2016 Call with RCEM ESCAP:** • UN says: Any such side event needs to focus more on the capacity angle rather than the problem, should not politicize the issue too much. Governments would like to engage more constructively but don't know how. So such even would raise the issue of declining space, but would focus really on the needed capacities. • CSOs comment: We need to

Civil Society Coalition on SD

• Bolivia thinks that there is too much emphasis on economic issues and not clears how the environment is integrated there; Harmony with Nature, Mother Earth etc is important, a message that has come directly from Bolivia and which should be part of a new view of the world. • All 48 LDCs supported a stand-alone goal on CC, whereas developed and emerging countries were also okay with its main tenets integrated throughout the agenda. • Northern countries supported things such as lifestyles, whereas other countries wanted stronger forms of governing. • peace and good institutions was something that falls into sovereign MS, and therefore might not be useful in an international goal (Pakistan) • 58 countries were in the 'friends of rule of law' promotion group. Others (Brazil, Nicaragua) were not as keen to see it at goal level. • Generally, rule of law was one of the most difficult to agree on language	importance of capacity development. Expert meetings themselves are often justified on grounds of contributing to building capacity, so often a mix of advanced and lesser developed countries are invited to such meetings in order to facilitate a flow of information and 'capacity' to participants. However, it is rare that political economy, or power issues are discussed. It most often assumed that anyone with the right capacity would support the SDGs and implement them. This maybe overly simplistic. **Berlin May 2-4 2016 Conference:** • Experts say that taking action on the SDGs "needs engagement from all corners of society to be implemented, all have an essential and leading role to play, but establishing safe and constructive spaces for cooperation will be essential". This is true but is simplistic. • Conferences alone are not going to implement the SDGs • Need to take a systems approach to deal with the systemic issues (trade, inequality) • German minister for forestry and resources: "There is a critique towards international cooperation and there is a re- nationalisation movement in Europe. So even international consensus will be questioned < the counter discourse to the SDGs and neoliberalism is not	have a very clear objective on what we want to achieve in the long term, otherwise we are being led into whatever processes are in the UN. We can work with the UN but need to retain our overarching goal. We need to look enabling environment, it is not just about capacity but is the environment enabling in the first place. We need to keep challenging them on this. **RCEM internal meeting CM Dec 2016:** • See overall notes below table. **APCFSD 2016 Session on CSOs:** • There is no one in the government dealing with what the SDGs mean for national level in Korea yet. But ODA perspective and international perspective better prepared in developed countries. • ODA issues or international issues and groups working on them are engaged more so than

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points in the entire OWG proposal. • Many of the concerns regarding elements of the SDGs related to politicized issues such as governance, democracy, climate change, trade, etc. There was an attempt to disconnect the agenda from politics, although as observer one could be skeptical towards such undertaking. Many countries often emphasized that political aspects (such as rule of law etc) be phrased for a developmental aspect and not a political aspect, and they should not be too prescriptive because many of the areas addressed in this goal are focused at national levels. • US said that "Targets need to be simpler to ensure that they are accessible by a broad audience needs to be more strategic and less technical" • G77 and China proposed changing title from 'policy and institutional coherence' to 'systemic issues'. Also though that draft outcome document over stresses the importance of multi stakeholder partnerships. • Chair said: 'It is not a legally binding	only CSOs but actually also the Trumps and the 'isolationists'. But their rationalities are not one of fairness (like the CSOs) but one of 'I do not want to share my wealth'. • How does the UN have to act on a new situation, the North-south relationship is ended, how to adjust the UN now (Toepfer as private person). He also thought that Financial market needs to be centrally involved with the SDGs; (contributing token amounts to the SDGs, or being overseen by something, he is clearly recognizing the systemic barrier to sustainability which the financial sector is, but he doesn't have a realistic solution as to how it should be involved. Topfer also thought that "the SDG processes are too head-focused and too far away from action, we need to make it more actionable. Must become more concrete and more radical, even for the science discourse, we need in the sciences to discuss what types of sciences are helpful for transformative change". • There is a reluctance from donors to deal with issues they perceive as being political in recipient countries, so in reality the donors thus avoid supporting real issues, rights infringements etc, because aid goes through governments and often the governments are the perpetrators of citizens' rights.	those working on domestic issues. Those with more access and experience need to reach out domestically to those who don't yet have the access. • There were complaints on the capacity gaps that some CSOs face. Even their issues are legitimate, the ways to engage are not straightforward which makes the engagement something that only a chosen few can enjoy and often those do not way radical things to not jeopardise their space of engagement. So engagement becomes an end in itself, and a contested space where power and influence struggles emerge within CSO groups. **<u>APCFSD and APFSD 2017:</u>** • Organistions that have regional and global expertise automatically get scored higher than organsations that for example may be really good nationally, but do not have the reach or capacity to engage

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legal text, but an aspirational set of goals and targets, so no need for statements now' • Bolivia and G77 • Want to see amendments of 1.2 - to 'at least by half' to have more detail, and add 'in all its dimensions' to poverty • SDGs Summit GA 2015 Page 45 • US said that climate action is a moral calling; development is threatened by war; combating illicit finance must be a global effort etc. They also said that: terrorism, virus, pandemic, financial markets and climate to argue for an integrated world in which no-one is independent from each others' well-being and that cooperation is necessary. • France talked about a financial transactions tax from 2017 • Croatia – SDGs are a blueprint for our better future, an obligation, 'we owe it to our children' • Germany said UN needs reform to meet current challenges; and need to combat not symptoms but root causes at all levels • India – a world without poverty • AVIVA and project everyone, where	• For good CSO participation need to reduce the confrontational aspects of the communication between CSOs and governments for instance. • Social contract with Nature is also important, western and indigenous voices need to come to the table. **<u>APFSD 2016:</u>** • ESCAP promoting mainstreaming of SD in national policies and programming; data and statistics, disaster response; policy coherence; best practice guidelines; tax forum, regional financing and others; • ESCAP ES during discussions on APFSD form and function: Simply trying to support countries. Not creating a parallel process. Need for capacity building, technical support. Technical cooperation projects. Development capacities of govts. Roadmap tries to collate support. Not taking follow up and review at global. • UNEP says VNRs are key for peer learning **<u>ISAP 2016:</u>** • NGO community and UN helped to show countries that the INDCs alone would not cut it, so it is like creating an alliance to push for more ambition (this is the first time, this type of alliance which I myself have seen in action	internationally. • Selection committee is a big issue (inclusion exclusion), criteria à ESCAP has requirement that all ECOSOC accredited organizations need to be automatically accepted ahead of others who are not accredited. • Getting together to form COMMON positions. This is good, but also may work counter to the diversity that exists among CSOs forcing commonalities upon them. Does that mean there is a coercion of positions 'competition of voices'? • From starting with 75 organisations there are 667 organisations. In the beginning there were 45 organisations coming, now there are 147 organisational representatives present. • ES said: "This model of CSO networking is influencing self organization of CSOs over the globe, greatly enhanced the

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the wording of the goals was reformulated to better fit and be understood by a broader public, from sustainable to responsible consumption etc; simplified at goal level. • IMF said More inclusive growth is also stronger growth (argument for equality); so back to the growth mantra and their reason-d-etre • Rights interpreted as technique of self governance, as per Denmark's commit during the GA: "Human Rights and Gender Rights -- unleashing the power of the individual for the common good…or women are key drivers of SD"… He didn't say this Danish government is proposing to cut 350 Million USD is their development aid (to bring to 0.7), which would be the lowest in 40 years. • The EU also said" Global challenges must be dealt with multilaterally, these challenges will help pave the way for the global community to emerge strengthened" ← multilateralism in response to development challenges.	several times has been mentioned by others) • Kaveh about stakeholder engagement: Bringing in the non-state actors is important, governments are not in the lead always. So really including them and ensuring they feel ownership of the agreement makes a large difference. Not just having a stakeholder meeting a week beforehand and then pat them on the back is no good. • That it is about defining your own priorities and about development being for everyone and not just for poor countries, this is an important element (Taubiana). He also said: "SDGs and climate are now national interest issues, that is a huge difference from before. When it is national interest, then there is a system of implementation at domestic level, and we don't have to rely on international law (which has not helped in the past). • Kaveh: Transformation in economic models, because economic growth alone is insufficient to deal with social and environmental challenges, need people centered development. Transformation in financing will be important not just ODA but about the rules and inceptives governing financial markets, has in the past disadvantaged long term investment so cannot make right directions. • Kaveh: multistakeholder approach is needed,	quality of dialogue at the APFSD, even reported at world congress of CSOs in Korea" • Targets, indicators, laws don't work at the grassroot level, they don't fix attitudes (Pakistan/Indian contribution on development justice barriers) • There is a big difference between making health services available, and really making them accessible (financially, culturally etc) • Systemic barriers are mentioned including religious fundamentalism, patriarchy, and corporate capture, land-grabbing, trade and investment. But the main barrier is capitalism. • We assume power, then we have power, the power is within us. • Azra: "Sometimes I wonder if our states, our representatives are living? For us in society to live in Pakistan (or other places), to be a woman, famer,

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- US talking about certain principles being universal
- Cambodian gov't: "you can design sustainability from engineering approach but from economic competitiveness it is not possible"

APFSD 2016

- Sri Lanka: Good governance, free healthcare, education etc; economic growth for quality of life;
- East Timor: focus on social development, security and climate change; important for countries to come together and contribute ideas;
- Mongolia: resource efficiency; green development through efficiency gains; obsolete technologies; need to build partnerships with other countries
- Tajikistan: sure the SDGs are all important but need to prioritise food security, communications, energy security first
- Parliamentarians say that legislation is important for implementation
- Pakistan "In a global era we need to move towards a shared vision at all levels"

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but fundamental stakeholder is national stats office; otherwise we cannot track progress, running training on data and to see where are the gaps; the UN itself is also a stakeholder, UN also not prepared for implementation.

- Neth about technology facilitation mechanism under the UN, "crucial to success is ensuring that it will not just become another platform for buying and selling technology from developed to developing countries; the intent is to match the needs to countries and communities with existing, accessible and affordable technologies.

ESCAP SDGs week Dec 2016:

- SDGs should be both rights and responsibilities of people (Ambassador to Grenada talking at expert meeting). →Two rationalities here.
- Movement on trade agreements that force us to move to standardization, brings intrusive business, competitiveness of the poor is getting worse.
- You could view the SDGs agenda as some small fringe discourse that is out of touch with the brutal reality and just represents a small elite. On the other hand if key aspects of equality, SCP, FUR and other key goals and targets are emphasized there is a possibility to blaze and make a change with this agenda.
- FUR: can be seen as management tool or

or a homeless in Pakistan is to be 'the bits'."

- Private sector an engine of growth, but responsible for the killing of millions and millions
- "In many countries we cannot even have a simple seminar like this, they would come and close it down. (about the APCFSD)
- The role of development funds, and how they, by hegemonic countries, are used to create public sector partnerships. First a country gives military funds to a country to create havoc, and then they come in with development agencies and other companies (global alliance for improved nutrition for example) to give food to the poor.
- Till we get rid of corporate hegemony, till we get redistributive justice, there will no peace. • CSOs have no space, has no other way but to take that space. It doesn't mean it is the end, we keep surging ahead, they cannot kill all of us.

- Indonesia: National Decree on SDGs, but partnerships are crucial, no one size fits all.
- Bhutan: holistic approach, regional approach also important, national capacities also important
- Korea have 'competitive advantage' in SDGs 2,3, and 4; also green development transfer (tech transfer) to developing countries; BaU no longer an option, aligning national plans with SDGs, international development cooperation is key for SDGs.
- Thailand: APFSD could serve as peer learning platform; consolidate best practices (India)
- APFSD 2015 was already about peer learning, countries sharing what they're doing. Mostly good stuff, stuff on paper, little about challenges, and little on actual progress review.
- Kiribati: concern how to activate multilateral and developed countries to lead in SDGs' proactive implementation
- AusAid: AusAID already supporting goal 5, 2&14, 3&4, 11&8&7, 16/8. Trade up to 20% of domestic

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accountability tool. Which one is politically more suitable, or can you tailor the emphasis depending on your audience? ←if management tool then it is a form of governmentality.

JICA seminar/training on SDGs:

- Culture plays an important role in SD (Bhutan JICA staff)
- APCFSD:
- Dechen UNEP "there is a need for inclusive growth" ← can't leave anyone behind.
- ECOSOC VP: '1 billion people 'were extracted' from poverty during the MDGs

APFSD 2017:

- ESCAP is using many panels, as technique is panel/plenary based. Actually the space for CSOs is surprisingly broad with speakers allowed in every session. ESCAP is trying to set an example and push the envelope on CSO participation this year.

SD Transition Forum Korea 2018:

- DRM is key but is not a substitute for international cooperation.
- Central role of effective governance for achieving the SDGs; broad cross section of multistakeholders need to be involved, institutional and organizational accountability,

- Friends and comrades Keep marching, keep shouting, keep asking.
- Is the unwillingness to bring the private sector to this table not a barrier in itself? …Somebody who has victimized me how can you expect that I get into a consultation with him (referring to private sector). …Private means exclusive
- KOREA CSO: Domestic pressure from NGOs is upping action in the government
- Corroborating example from Indonesia: Indonesia's participation at 2017 HLPF VNR comes from CSOs (INFID), who last year sent a letter to the government, requesting them to report.
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs then organized a consultation with CSOs in January 2017
- Bappenas is then organizing the writing of the VNR report.
- Indonesia CSOs on CSO engagement: Local CSOs do not

program. Private sector investing 1.4B dollar this year to maximize impact of businesses. • Japan: Although govt takes main responsibility of SDG implem, other stakeholders active with inputs **<u>APFSD 2017:</u>** • Sri Lanka: If there is no transformation of existing trade, institutional, governance, policy coherence structures then the SDG bubble will burst in our faces in 2-3 years. • Sri Lanaka is going to start a stakeholder mapping process to do something about institutional coherence • SDGs is not about ticking boxes it is about transformation, commitment and targeted action. • Question to Swiss Development Agency (Michael Gerber): Do you think SDG can become a business model? yes definitely. And it is partly due to the act that the private sector were engaged in the SDGs processes so they own it. GC is also working, it now goes beyond public relations and window dressing	flexibility and adaptability. • 2030 Agenda is Ground breaking global promise (my comment: promises and expectations become the currency of the international meetings; promises never will be met, or new promises will be articulated for everyone to have hope about and pursue) • Bachmann: People feel left out when global elite talks about SD without roots to reality • VNRs and HLPF is a boring exercise, it is just window dressing and a beauty contest; not decisions are made. No journalists are interested in this. We need to take this very seriously. • In political terms, the notion of SD is stronger than the notion of neoliberalism and globalization. With this mindset we can tackle the notion of the weaknesses of the HLPF ß I disagree, neoliberalism has maybe just subversively penetrated so that it doesn't need to be explicitly mentioned or recognised, it is there. • Sometimes those that talk about the SDGs are an elite club and need to go to the ground. • Gunter: to build trust from the people first you need to trust the people; you need to listen carefully what the people are saying. • The SDGs are not achievable without multilateralism, but multilateralism is under	feel that they are sufficiently included, not in the VNR or any other. It is always the big players and academia that are included. • The VNR report should be approved by the cabinet, but not only the cabinet it should also be CSOs there • The participation and civic space is really differentiated. It means that expert organisations, or sefvice providers have increased space, but those advocating for social justice and Human Rights have shrinking space. This is a result of overall 'neoliberalisation' of development work, where HR would just increase 'transaction cost' of the development work. Adhering to HR is not automatically viewed as profitable. • Once you get engaged you will feel obligated to contribute. That's how participation creates ownership. However, if the participation is primarily

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- Fiji: Many partnerships are just on paper, there is a need for real and transformative partnerships. They need to be functional, transformative and proactive, country owned, held accountable. Partnerships should be integral part of planning and integration processes of SDG 14.
- Mozambique: "Most of the plans we like to do in Mozambique is just because we want donor support" "Most of the time I don't even understand the people that supposed to come and help us"
- Ukraine: "SDGs are good but you should be ready to protect yourself and your country"
- EU: Migration and terrorism challenges are taking the prime light at the moment, and if disasters are becoming more frequent it will become more and more difficult to plan for longer terms.

Sustainability Transition Forum Korea 2018:

- Gov't observation: If you can quantify the social, economic or environmental benefit of a policy,

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threat.
- Multilateralism was based on governments only but it is now based on partnerships.
- On neoliberalism and the 'responsibilisation' of the individual. Yes, but there are issues around oceans, migration etc. that clearly need governments to coordinate, not any other group. (but he didn't mention that governments exercise sovereign powers here, but rather that they 'coordinate'). So even though there is a push to keep sovereign role of power relevant, the exercise of that power seems to be through increasingly soft and neoliberal techniques.
- HLPF (global accountability mechanism) is currently seen rather as a forum for mutual learning rather than of accountability. ← voluntarism, really governmentality.
- the impression was that 'internationals' were much more active in the workshop than governmental representatives. Wonder if this is an issue of capacity, interest, or both. Is this agenda just for the internationals, there is much more ownership among the internationals on the SDGs compared to national governments? → this is the international side already having bought into the liberal agenda, ecological modernization, neoliberal one. It is the bread and butter of the internationals, whereas the governments come from a different angle, and

for experts and service providers, it will be them that own and direct the direction of the agenda.
- other countries (Nepal, US, Thailand) are increasing their military spending immensely, or are signing regional trade-agreements, two examples of policy action that jeopardises progress on SDGs, including in key such as the environment, education, and inequality. Without adjusting such offsetting investments, the SDGs remain a fringe narrative to destructive business as usual.

Expert Group Meeting on CSO engagement 2017:

- Very concerned about the undue faith in the private sector and their role in the SDGs, this has unleashed a new wave of neoliberalism (Ajay Jha).
- Many governments at the HLPF are not allowing CSOs to raise

even if it requires an upfront expenditure by the government, you may be successful with the proposal. Think in profit terms.	do not have the same ownership of the Agenda.	questions to their VNR reports.

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