



Metagovernance for Sustainability: Beyond the polycrisis lies complexity

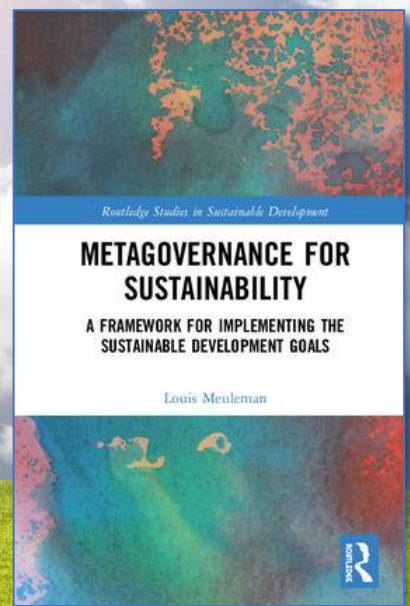
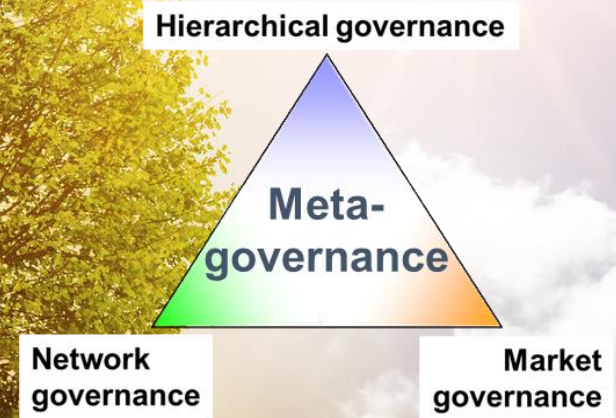
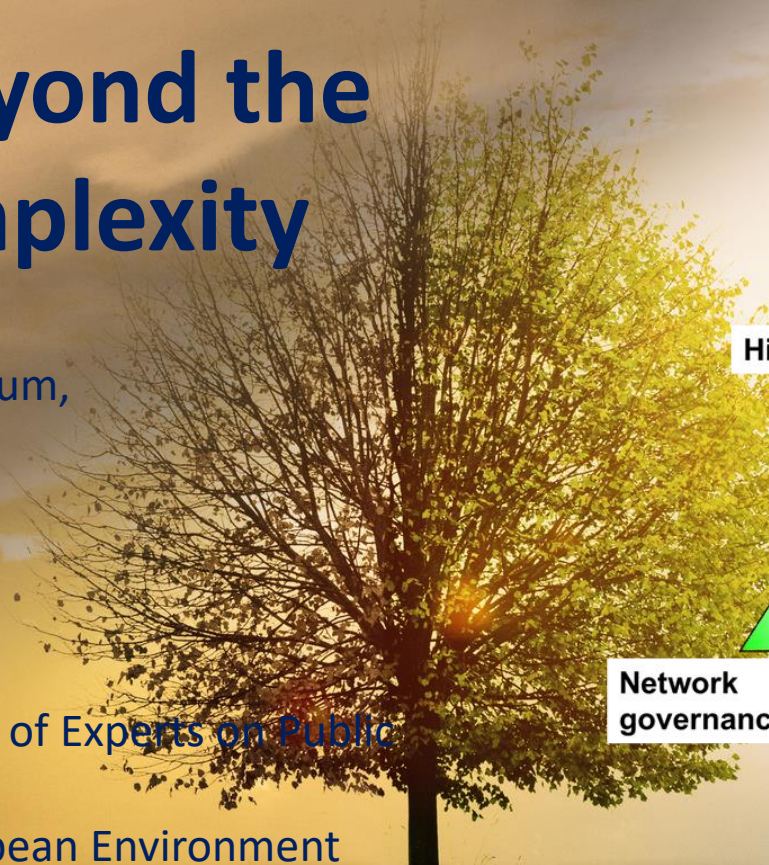


World Environment Day Virtual Symposium,

5 June 2023

Prof Dr **Louis Meuleman**

- Vice chair United Nations Committee of Experts on Public Administration
- Vice chair Scientific Committee European Environment Agency
- Visiting professor Leuven University;
- Director, Public Strategy for Sustainable Development, Brussels





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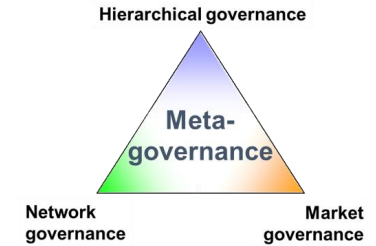
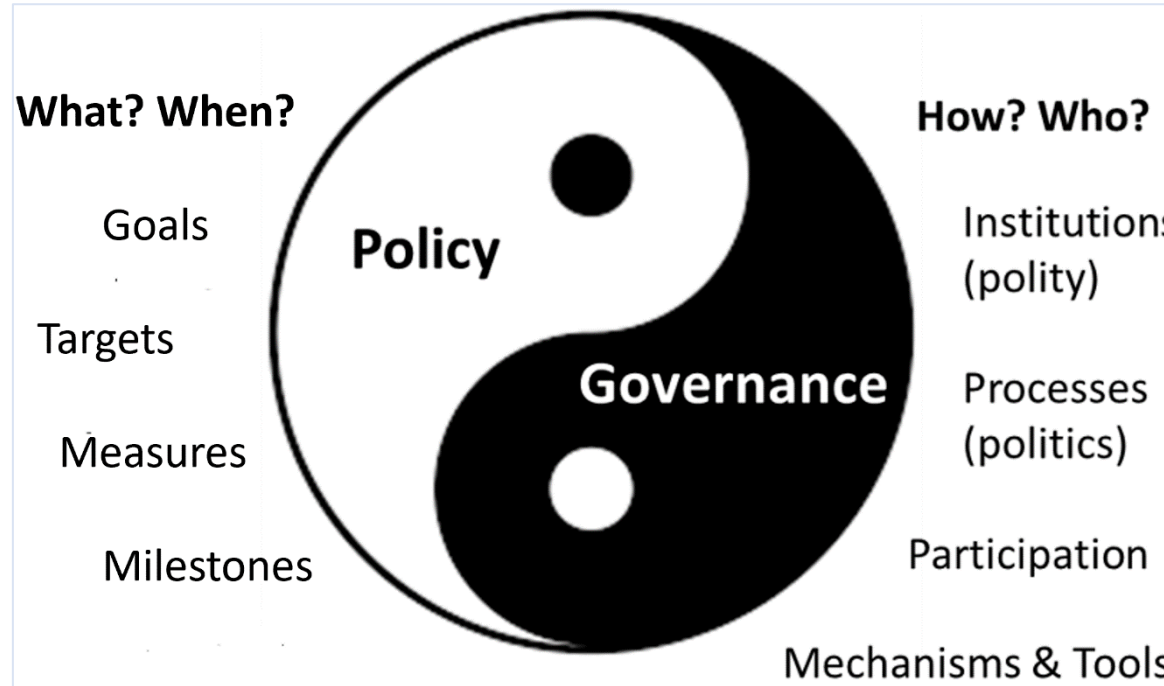


1. The 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are an **over-arching policy framework: a meta-policy.**

Policy is what we do and when, and this always needs **governance: how we do it and with whom.**

Policy and governance are the yin and yang of tackling societal problems.

SDGs **16 and 17** are the enablers: the governance Goals



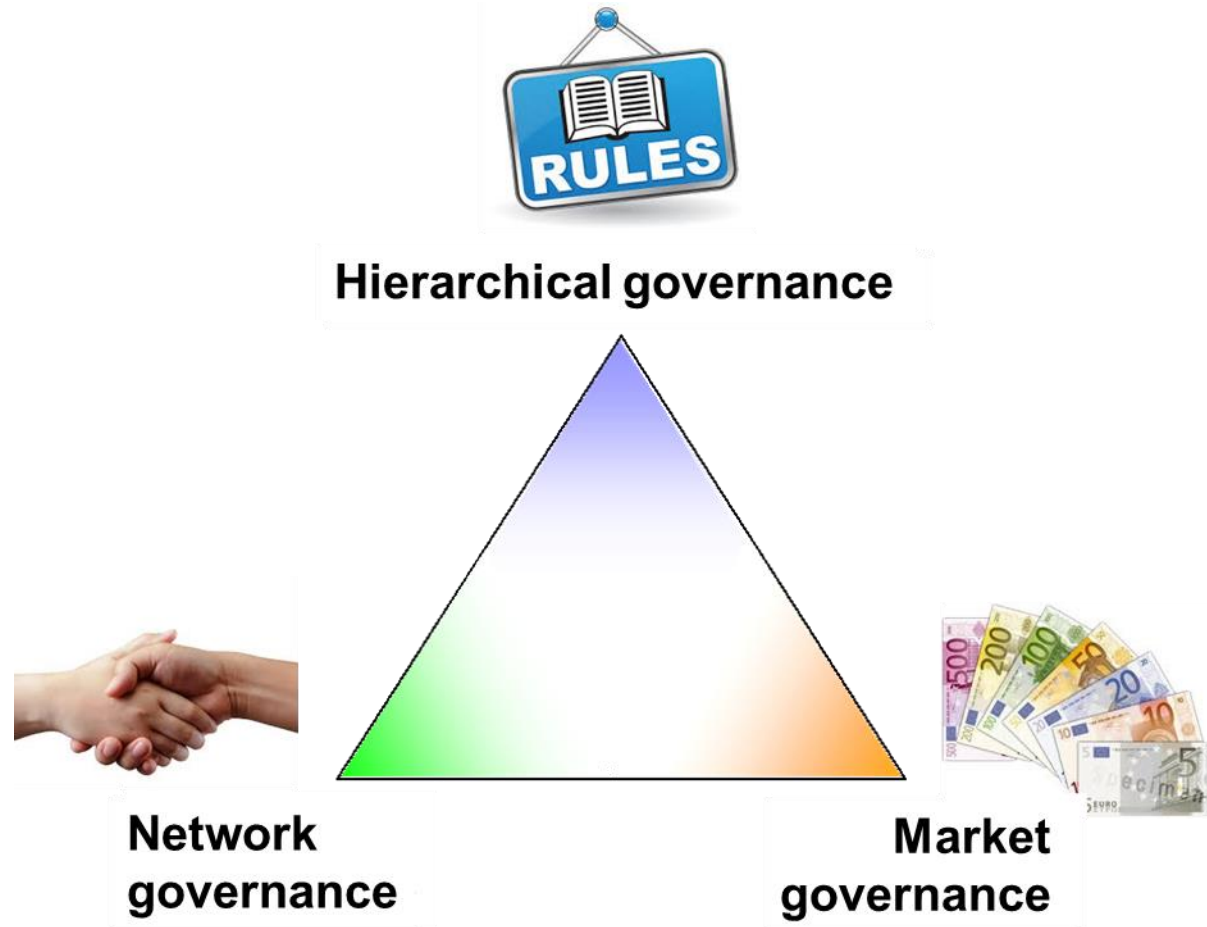


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2. Traditional governance can be **top-down** (hierarchical style), **collaborative** (network style) or **competitive** (market style).

Governance for the SDGs must be a dynamic **combination of all three** through management and design; this is called **meta-governance**.



If you only have a hammer, every problem looks like a nail (A. Maslov)



'Fragile' by bb_matt (via Flickr). CC BY licence.



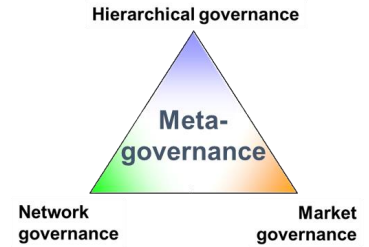
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3. Meta-governance gives more options: the three styles differ on at least **50 features of governance.**

Understanding this **full toolbox** prevents that we always try the same approach even if it does not deliver.

Feature	Hierarchical governance	Network governance	Market governance
46. Suitability for problem types	Crises, disasters, problems that can be solved by executing force	Complex, unstructured, multi-actor issues	Routine issues, non-sensitive issues



1.Ways of life	11.Strategy styles	21.Control mechanism	31.Accountability style	41.Values civil servants
2.Relational values	12.Reply to resistance	22.Coordin. mechanism	32.Type of context	42.Key competences
3.Theor. background	13.Organiz. orientation	23.Transaction types	33.Process/project mgt	43.Mgt. developm. obj.
4.Key concepts	14.Actor perceptions	24.Degree of flexibility	34.Reform approach	44.Dealing with power
5.Mode of calculation	15.Selection of actors	25.Level of commitment	35.Innovation style	45.Conflict resolution
6.Primary virtues	16.Stocktaking of actors	26.Communic. styles	36.Relation types	46.Problem types
7.Common motive	17.Institutional logic	27.Roles of knowledge	37.Social interactions	47.Problem framing
8.Motive of actors	18.Dealing with silos	28.Science-pol. interface	38.Public manager roles	48.Governance failures
9.Roles of government	19.Policy instruments	29.Impact assessments	39.Leadership styles	49.Public procurement
10.Metaphors	20.Decisionmaking unit	30.Access to information	40.Empowerment	50.Output and outcome



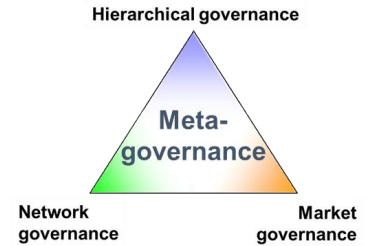
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4. **Crisis management** is important in current times, but many crises are **also ‘wicked’, complex problems** with interest conflicts.



Crisis management asks for a **fast**, top-down approach; complex problems require testing, trying, reflecting, which is a **slower** response.



Focus only on the polycrisis results in:

- Simplification
- Short termism
- Unlimited funding for crisis management
- Emergency laws -> undermining democracy
- Neglect of stakeholders

With **metagovernance as management framework** for leaders at all levels, we can put in place **mechanisms and institutions** that **ensure insight and oversight** of what is happening and **connect short- and long-term** governance for the big transitions to sustainability we need.



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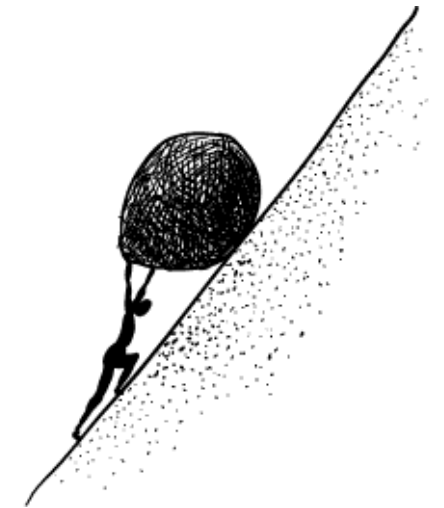
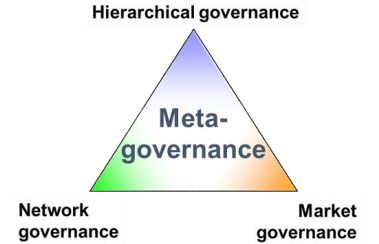
5. Investing in **policy coherence for sustainable development (PCSD)**; target SDG 17.14) contributes strongly to creating the conditions for metagovernance.

The 2030 Agenda



Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development (SDG 17.14)

1. Political Commitment & Leadership
2. Strategic Long-term Vision
3. Policy Integration
4. Whole-of-Government Coordination
5. Sub-national Engagement
6. Stakeholder Engagement
7. Policy and Financing Impacts
8. Monitoring, Reporting and Evaluation





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6. Civil society organisations, local communities, businesses can also be metagovernors of their own work, to dynamize it and **mix the different roles of being advocate and partner, for example.**

	Weak ←----- Engagement -----→ Strong				
Participation type:	Information	Consultation	Co-operation	Co-design	Co-decision
					



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louismeuleman@ps4sd.eu www.ps4sd.eu




Public Strategy for Sustainable Development

Ultimately, it's all about governance!


[Learn more](#)

Events




EEA Seminar on Policy & Governance for sustainability transitions
MAY 2023 - The European Environment Agency organises with the EEA Scientific Committee a seminar on policy and governance for sustainability...

News




Beau Lieu Café on 4 May 2023 - Video
MAY 2023 - On 4th May, a Beau Lieu Café on "SDGs in Better Regulation for Evidence-Informed Policymaking" took place at the Residence...

Publications



Can crisis governance drive out capacity for complexity?
APR 2023 - The fact that much of the political focus and resources are being used for crisis management can divert attention from complex, 'wicked'...



MANAGEMENT OF POLICY COHERENCE FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: TOWARDS METAGOVERNANCE

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Thank you for your attention!

[E: louismeuleman@ps4sd.eu](mailto:louismeuleman@ps4sd.eu)

<https://www.routledge.com/Metagovernance-for-Sustainability-A-Framework-for-Implementing-the-Sustainable/Meuleman/p/book/9780815370161>