Steering Global Energy Governance: Who governs and what do they do?

Abstract

In recent years there has been a growing interest in exploring indirect governance at the global level. However, very little work has considered these relationships in the domain of energy. In fragmented global governance domains, such as energy, the G20 has frequently been identified as an actor capable of steering other actors via indirect forms of governance. Yet to date, we do not have answers to key questions including, what is the range of actors being enrolled by the G20? And what governance functions are these actors enrolled to perform? To answer these questions I utilise a novel qualitative database of G20 enrolment since 2008, which shows that the G20 enrols international organizations more frequently than any other actor, and that agenda-setting is the most commonly performed governance function. This data is then matched with qualitative interview data to make descriptive inferences about the patterns of global energy governance, including the extent of fragmentation, the identity of focal actors, the G20's steering role and how these patterns have changed over time.

Keywords: Global governance, energy, enrolment, fragmentation, and G20.

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1. Introduction

In recent years there has been a growing interest in exploring indirect governance at the global level (Abbott et al., 2015a, Henriksen and Ponte, 2018, Green, 2018). However, less work has considered these relationships in the domain of energy (van de Graaf, 2017, Lesage et al., 2009, Lesage and Graaf, 2013). Like many domains, energy is characterised by complexity and fragmentation (Biermann et al., 2009, Raustiala and Victor, 2004). Indeed there is no universal international organisation (IO) that governs energy. Instead there is a jumble of partially overlapping non-hierarchical institutions, often with conflicting goals, which most scholars conclude is a mess (Florini, 2012, Hirst and Froggatt, 2012). This includes, the International Energy Agency (IEA), the International Energy Forum (IEF), the Energy Charter Treaty, OPEC, and the more recently established International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA), among many others.

In fragmented global governance domains the G20 has frequently been identified as an actor capable of steering other actors with overlapping mandates through indirect governance (Cooper, 2010, Van de Graaf and Westphal, 2011, Kirton and Kokotsis, 2016, Kirton, 2013, Goldthau, 2017). Yet to date, we do not have answers to key questions typically asked by scholars of regulation and governance, including what is the range of actors being enrolled by the G20? What governance functions are these actors enrolled to perform? To what extent is it able to steer other actors? And, what are the implications of doing so? While previous studies have mapped the various IOs in the domain of energy (Florini and Sovacool, 2009), examined individual IOs (Downie, 2020, Karlsson-Vinkhuyzen, 2010, Van de Graaf, 2013), and even considered the interactions between individual actors, such as the IEA and OPEC (van de Graaf, 2017), there remain no systematic answers to these questions that consider the full range of actors and governance functions. Answers to these questions are not just important for understanding the role the G20 could play in global energy governance by enrolling other actors, but equally for understanding the patterns of indirect governance at the global level, and the contribution they could make to solving urgent global problems in policy domains characterised by complexity and fragmentation.

To explore these questions and fill this gap in the literature, this paper examines the G20's enrolment of other actors in the domain of energy since 2008 when the G20 was elevated to a leaders' summit. Enrolment refers to cases where the G20 has explicitly linked to other actors that have different regulatory capacities (Black, 2003: 84). I utilise a novel database of G20 enrolment in the domain of energy. I disaggregate each case of enrolment by actor type and by governance function. This highlights not only who the G20 is enrolling to govern energy, but also what functions they are enrolled to perform. For example, the analysis shows that in the domain of energy, the G20 enrols IOs more than 90 per cent of the time, whereas non-state actors and transnational networks are enrolled in only around 10 per cent of cases. Further, in the vast majority of cases the actor is enrolled to perform activities associated with agenda setting, rather than harder governance activities, such as rule-setting, which are much less frequent.

Matching this dataset with qualitative data, I use descriptive inference to make some generalised claims about the patterns of global energy governance and the role of state and non-state actors. In particular, the observable cases of enrolment are used to explore the extent of fragmentation, the identity of focal actors, and the G20's steering role. What it shows is that while global energy governance is indeed fragmented with the G20 enrolling some 43 different actors over the last decade, there are variations across issues areas. For example, the IEA emerges as the focal actor in the overall domain of energy, but not in each of the issue areas, and G20 attempts to steer this myriad set of actors does not always produce desirable outcomes. Finally, the dataset also provides insights into how these patterns have changed over the last decade. In other words, it helps to capture the temporal dimension.

The next section reviews the relevant literature on indirect governance and global energy governance. Section three describes the data and methods, including how the dataset was created, before sections four and five consider the findings from the data.

2. What we know about indirect governance, the G20, and energy

Scholars of regulation and governance have long highlighted how much of the governance that takes place is indirect (Gunningham et al., 1998, Grabosky, 1995). This is certainly true at the global level. States regularly rely on IOs to act on their behalf to set international rules, monitor state compliance, or to coordinate a response to a global crisis (Bradley and Kelley, 2008, Hawkins et al., 2006). States and IOs also employ other non-state actors, or transnational networks of non-state actors, to do the same things (Bulkeley et al., 2012). And it is not only states and IO's enrolling others. Empirical studies have shown how business actors, for example, used some of the most powerful states in the world to shape global business regulations (Braithwaite and Drahos, 2000).

While scholars have conceptualised these forms of indirect governance in a variety of ways, one of the most influential over the last decade, and the one relied on in this paper, is Julia Black's (2003) concept of "enrolment". Enrolment is based on the assumption that the capacity for governance is spread across many actors. Governance outcomes are not the product of a single actor, such as a state, regulating a citizen that commits a crime, but is the outcome of a multitude of actors that interact in complex ways. Enrolment therefore refers to a strategy for linking actors that have different regulatory capacities to enhance the capacity of all actors (Black, 2003, Havinga and Verbruggen, 2017). Like other forms of indirect governance, it recognises that governance outcomes are frequently co-produced by state and non-state actors whose authority and legitimacy is often contested (Dellas et al., 2011: 87, Pattberg and Stripple, 2008).

One of the strengths of enrolment is what it captures. As Black (2003: 86-90) explains, enrolment can be analysed by considering the nature of the inter-relationship between actors, by the function that an actor is being enrolled to perform, the resources that are

being enrolled, and by the character of the enrolment, and these dimensions can be considered individually or in various combinations. Hence in enrolment the relationship between actors can be hierarchical, competitive or cooperative, for example. Actors can be enrolled for any number of resources, such as information, or to perform any number of functions, be it agenda-setting or rule-setting. Finally, the character of enrolment, for example, can be formal, informal, or ad hoc.

This provides a broader conceptualisation of indirect governance than other approaches, which are more narrowly defined. For example, one of the most popular conceptualisations of indirect governance in the literature is orchestration (Abbott et al., 2015a, Abbott et al., 2015b). Orchestration also seeks to capture governance relationships, but a particular type of relationship, namely indirect relationships with soft forms of control. For example, whereas in enrolment the character of enrolment can be formal, informal or ad hoc, under orchestration the character of enrolment is distinctly informal. Indeed in setting out orchestration, which is said to occur when an actor enlists intermediary actors on a voluntary basis to address target actors in pursuit of governance goals, Abbott et al. (2015a) distinguish it from other forms of governance that have hard forms of control, such as hierarchy or delegation. Thus, orchestration might be considered a specific form of enrolment.

Accordingly, given the range of questions this paper seeks to answer, including the types of actors being enrolled by the G20, and the governance functions they are enrolled to perform, enrolment is employed here as opposed to orchestration, or other parallel concepts that seek to understand fragmented governance domains, such as regime complexity (Raustiala and Victor, 2004). The principal benefit of this approach, as others have pointed out (Henriksen and Ponte, 2018), is that it does not presuppose whether the relationship between actors is cooperative or competitive, for example, or whether the character of enrolment is formal or informal. Instead it stresses the messy reality of regulatory outcomes and the complex nature of governance relationships.

Over the last decade, arguably some of the most significant indirect global governance relationships have been between the G20 and the variety of state and non-state actors it has enrolled to carry out governance functions. For example, in the aftermath of the global financial crisis, much of the scholarly focus has been on how the G20 used organizations, such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the Financial Stability Board (FSB) to promote the reform of international financial regulation and supervision (Helleiner, 2014, Viola, 2015). This work has not just been restricted to finance, others, for example, have looked at the G20's role in the domain of climate change (Slaughter, 2017), food security (Clapp and Murphy, 2013), and indeed energy (Downie, 2015).

Despite the growing interest in exploring indirect governance at the global level and the related work on the G20, in many domains characterised by fragmentation we still know relatively little about how it operates. In the domain of energy, we do not have answers to the basic empirical questions that Black (2003) argues are fundamental to

analysing indirect governance relationships. The first question is which actors are being enrolled? In theory the G20 can enrol almost any type of state or non-state actor. The fact that the G20 has no founding treaty or permanent secretariat, means that it is likely to be especially reliant on other actors to perform governance activities. The question is which ones? What we do know is that historically the G20 has worked closely with formal IOs, such as the IMF, World Bank, and the OECD, especially during the financial crisis (Viola, 2015). We know that the G20 has frequently relied on international financial institutions, such as the FSB, to set rules around international financial regulation and supervision and to monitor compliance (Helleiner, 2014). What is less well documented is the range of actors the G20 explicitly links to across policy domains. In the domain of energy, for example, there has been very little exploration of the G20's relationships with other actors, though some have focussed on the organization's relationship with the IEA (Downie, 2015, van de Graaf, 2017). However, to what extent it enrols other actor types in the domain of energy, such as transnational networks, is largely unknown (Bulkeley et al., 2012).

The second question is what governance functions are these actors being enrolled to perform? In the context of global governance, these parties will typically be enrolled to perform one or more governance functions. Indeed some actors will be enrolled to perform several functions, which may change over time. Although there are a wide variety of governance functions (or what others call governance activities) in the literature a discrete set can be identified: agenda-setting; capacity building; rule-making; implementation and enforcement; and monitoring and compliance – see methods section for more detail (Avant et al., 2010: 14-16, Bulkeley et al., 2012, Abbott and Snidal, 2009, Black, 2003, Andonova et al., 2009). Different actors will of course possess different resources making them more or less suitable at performing different governance functions (Black, 2003). For example, expertise is a critical resource especially in domains characterised by technical complexity, such as energy. Third parties may well be enrolled because they have the technical capacity to analyse data, model behaviour and manage risk. Or for example, an actor may be enrolled to set the agenda not only because of its expertise, but also because of its' legitimacy (Buchanan and Keohane, 2006, Bernstein, 2011). In the context of indirect governance, third parties that are perceived to have the right to govern, which may be a function of their independence, representativeness, or other resources, such as expertise, will often be called upon to carry out governance functions (Black, 2003, Abbott et al., 2017: 21). Recent empirical studies of the G20's role on fossil fuel subsidies shed some light, for instance, on agenda-setting and on the role played by IOs in monitoring member state compliance with commitments to phase-out energy subsidies (van Asselt and Skovgaard, 2016). However, there has been no systematic analysis of what actors are enrolled to perform what governance functions in the energy domain.

3. Methods and data

A mixed methods approach was used to facilitate descriptive inferences about the state of global energy governance (Bazeley, 2018: 278-279). In particular, quantitative analysis of a new database developed for this project was matched with the collection of qualitative data.

3.1 Quantitative data

The quantitative data is based on a new database of G20 enrolment in the domain of energy. The database is drawn from G20 leaders' communiques, G20 energy ministerial communiques, and associated G20 energy action plans collected and stored by the G20 Research Group at the University of Toronto, dating back to the first summit held in Washington D.C. in 2008. To be included in the database cases had to meet several criteria. First, the G20 had to explicitly name the actor it was referring to in any of the above documentation. It could not simply state that it had asked "international organizations" to carry out governance functions. Second, and related, cases had to refer to a third party, not to the G20 itself. For example, should the G20 state that "member states will work together on energy policy" this was not considered as a case of enrolment. Third, the case had to explicitly be in the domain of energy (Burstein, 1991). Cases focussed on climate change, such as references to the UNFCCC were excluded. To avoid double counting, cases were only included once if they were referenced by more than one source in the same year.

The selection process generated 196 cases of enrolment between 2008 and 2019 in the domain of energy. Each case was coded by actor type, governance function, and issue area. The quantitative data were then exported to SPSS Statistics V25 for analysis. Several steps were taken to ensure validity and reliability. First, clearly defined and specific coding rules were established to ensure consistent coding. Second, coding was done manually using excel, rather than using automating coding software. Third, a random sample of cases were cross-checked by a second researcher in order to ensure consistency of coding. Finally, the documents collected for the database were frequently matched with information collected from searches of individual organizational websites, annual reports and correspondence with some organizations.

Four broad actor types were coded: formal IOs; informal IOs; individual non-state actors; and transnational networks. Formal IOs refer to any international intergovernmental organization formalised through a treaty and institutionalised with a permanent secretariat, such as the UN, the IMF or the WTO. Informal IOs are generally distinguished from formal IOs by having no founding treaty and limited institutionalisation, such as no permanent secretariat (Klabbers, 2001, Vabulas and Snidal, 2013, Roger, 2020). While no IO will perfectly fit these definitions, for the purposes of coding, an IO that did not have both a treaty and a secretariat was coded as informal. This includes organizations, such as the G20 itself, which have no treaty or secretariat and others, such as SE4ALL, which has a secretariat, but no formal treaty,

and indeed classifies itself as a "quasi IO" (Interview 40). Non-state actors refer here to both for-profit actors, such as firms and industry groups, and non-profit actors, such as environmental NGOs, consumer groups, or human rights organizations. Finally, and perhaps the actor type over which there is most conjecture in the literature, are transnational networks. A transnational network is generally used to refer to "regular interactions across national boundaries when at least one actor is a non-state agent or does not operate on behalf of a national government or an intergovernmental organization" (Risse-Kappen, 1995: 3). Subsequent scholarship has developed numerous typologies of transnational networks that focus on private, public, and hybrid networks, among others (Bulkeley et al., 2012, Keck and Sikkink, 1998, Downie, 2014). Here I employ the broader definition above to capture all transnational networks that the G20 may enrol, be they networks of professional bodies, of firms and NGOs working together across borders, or of IOs, state actors and industry groups.

These third parties will typically be enrolled to perform one or more governance functions. Drawing on the existing governance literature cases were coded for five main governance functions. The first is agenda-setting, that is, defining a problem and placing it on the global agenda. While some scholars separate information sharing from agenda-setting (Bulkeley et al., 2012: 595-596), here agenda-setting includes the collection and dissemination of information to help frame a problem (Avant et al., 2010: 14), which is also consistent with the approach taken by others that refer to the role that IOs play in "direction-setting" (Kirton and Kokotsis, 2016). A second is capacity building, which can include the provision of labor, technical expertise, or technology, among other resources that can enhance the capacity of an actor to carry out governance tasks (Andonova et al., 2009: 64). These two functions are typically followed by what are arguably stronger forms of governance. This includes rule-making, a third function, where actors are tasked with setting rules that seek to affect the behaviour of target actors be they states, IOs, or non-state actors. Fourth however, because rules are often contested and imprecise, especially in informal governance relationships (Abbott and Snidal, 2000), third parties are often called upon to implement rules on the ground, and to the extent possible at a global level, enforce them as well. Fifth, in addition to implementation and enforcement, a range of actors often undertake the critical function of monitoring compliance with the rules that have been implemented or with the commitments that have been made (Avant et al., 2010: 14-16). To illustrate, when the G20 tasked the IEA to write a report on the scope of fossil fuel subsidies this was coded as agenda-setting. Similarly, if the IEA was asked to provide technical expertise to another actor this was coded as capacity building, whereas if it was asked to produce a report tracking G20 commitments on fossil fuel subsidies, this was coded as monitoring. Further, in cases when the G20 explicitly referenced more than one actor to undertake the same governance function, such as jointly writing a report, this was coded as steering. Steering is frequently used in the governance literature, especially in relation to the G20, but it is rarely defined (Van de Graaf and Westphal, 2011). In relation to IOs, it is generally seen to involve initiating, guiding, or prodding other actors, in part by giving them specific tasks, in order to bring greater coherence to

existing governance arrangements (Hale and Roger, 2014, Van de Graaf and Westphal, 2011).

Each case in the domain of energy was also coded by issue area. To be clear a "policy domain" can be considered a domain organized around a substantive issue and the constituent parts of that domain are the "issue areas" (Burstein, 1991: 328). Each case was coded according to five principal issue-areas: fossil fuels; energy access; energy efficiency; renewable energy; nuclear energy. For example, any case that explicitly dealt with oil, gas, or coal, be it fossil fuel subsidies, or carbon, capture and storage was coded as fossil fuels. Likewise, any case that dealt with wind, solar, or related issues, such as energy transitions was coded as renewable energy.

While care was taken to collect and code the data, it is likely to be incomplete in two ways. First, G20 links to third parties not captured in official documentation are not captured in the dataset. Interviews with G20 officials (discussed below) suggest that there are likely to be only a limited number of such cases given the database included G20 leaders' communique, ministers' communique, as well as related energy action plans. Second, no data were recorded for 2018. During the G20 Presidency of Argentina none of the G20 documentation explicitly referred to third parties, instead only generic phrases were referenced, such as "relevant international organisations" making it impossible to identify individual third parties. Given the G20 dealt with similar energy issues in 2018, it is not expected that data for 2018 if included would significantly alter the findings.

Finally, this data only allows an analysis from the perspective of the G20. However, given that the G20 comprises the most significant economies in the world and the largest energy producers and consumers, which other actors, such as the G7/G8 do not, the G20 provides a valuable lens through which to examine related issues, such as the state of fragmentation in global energy governance. Further, the value of this perspective is supported by the qualitative data described below, which in many cases confirms the findings of the quantitative data.

3.2 Qualitative data

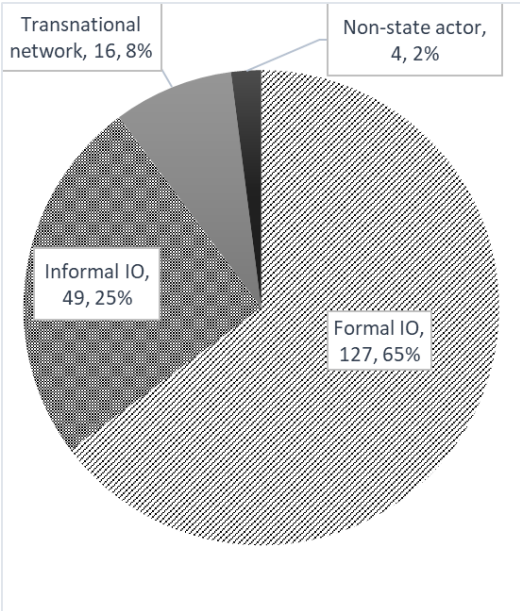
Between 2015 and 2019 semi-structured interviews were conducted with 64 respondents. Firstly, this comprised 26 interviews with current and former officials from a variety of international actors engaged in the domain of energy, including the Clean Energy Ministerial, IEA, IMF, IRENA, OECD, Sustainable Energy for All and the World Bank. Secondly, it comprised 38 interviews with current and former G20 sherpas and officials of foreign affairs and energy agencies in the following G20 member states: Argentina, Australia, China, the European Commission, France, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Russia, the US, and Saudi Arabia.

4. Descriptive statistics

4.1 Who governs?

While previous research has highlighted the important role of the G20 in global energy governance (Downie, 2015, Andrews-Speed and Shi, 2016, Van de Graaf and Westphal, 2011), to date little is known about the range of actors that the G20 interacts with. As Figure 1 shows, between 2008 and 2019 the G20 enrolled third parties 196 times in the domain of energy. The vast majority were formal IOs, which made up 65 per cent, followed by informal IOs, which made up 25 per cent. Interestingly, non-state actors and transnational network make up just 10 per cent together, perhaps reflecting that G20 member states prefer to enrol other intergovernmental actors over which they may have more control than non-state actors.

Figure 1: G20 enrolments by actor types, 2008-2019



The dominance of formal IOs was also manifest across all issue areas – fossil fuels, energy access, energy efficiency, renewable energy, and nuclear energy. In addition, when combined with informal IOs these actors represented more than three-quarters of all cases. Energy access and energy efficiency were the only two issue areas where informal IOs came close to equalling formal IOs. This was largely because of the frequent enrolment of SE4ALL and IPEEC respectively, discussed below.

4.2 What do they do?

Table 1 shows the distribution of policy functions across the 196 cases of enrolment in the energy domain. Given that each case of enrolment can involve multiple governance functions, the total N is 259. Agenda-setting is easily the most frequent governance function performed by third parties enrolled by the G20, and rule-setting the least frequent. In other words, much of the governance performed by these indirect

relationships are soft modes of governance that have weaker and less precise obligations This is also consistent with the view in the literature that much of the global governance that takes place is relatively weak and is not underpinned by legally binding commitments and enforcement (Abbott and Snidal, 2000, Brummer, 2015).

Table 1: Number and distribution of actors responsible for each governance function, 2008-2019

	Actor								Total	
Governance functions	Formal IO		Informal IO		Non-state actor		Transnational network			
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Agenda setting	97	63.8%	37	24.3%	3	2.0%	15	9.9%	152	100.0%
Rule-setting	5	71.4%	2	28.6%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	7	100.0%
Implementation and enforcement	28	68.3%	11	26.8%	1	2.4%	1	2.4%	41	100.0%
Monitoring evaluation	15	78.9%	4	21.1%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	19	100.0%
Capacity building	22	55.0%	9	22.5%	1	2.5%	8	20.0%	40	100.0%
Total functions	167	64.5%	63	24.3%	5	1.9%	24	9.3%	259	100.0%

Table 1 also shows the types of governance functions each actor type performs. What becomes quickly apparent is that formal IOs are responsible for the large majority of governance undertaken. Indeed formal IOs are responsible for more than two-thirds of four of the five governance functions. Together formal and informal IOs are performing almost 90 per cent of all the governance activities. Transnational networks that can include state and non-state actors perform nine per cent of governance activities, and non-state actors perform just two per cent. This is somewhat consistent with other studies in global environmental governance that show that non-state actors play a limited role as third parties in indirect governance relationships (Green, 2018: 8).

There are a couple of possible explanations for these findings. On the one hand, given that informal IOs, such as the G20, will have few means to control third parties in the ways envisaged in principal-agent models (Hawkins et al., 2006, Miller, 2005), it could be the case that G20 member states prefer intergovernmental bodies over which they are likely to have some control, rather than non-state actors, which may be more autonomous. This explanation is strengthened by the observation that those governance functions, which on the surface would appear to have the highest sovereignty costs, namely rule-setting, implementation and enforcement, and monitoring and evaluation, are associated with the lowest levels of non-state actors or transnational networks. On the other hand, it could be the case that the role played by third parties reflects their availability (Abbott et al., 2015a). For example, in the case of the G20 in the domain of

energy, IOs, such as the IEA or OECD, can easily play the role of third parties and are already integrated into the G20 negotiation processes with seats at the table either at the summit level or working group level, which is not the case for non-state actors (Downie and Crump, 2017).

5. Inferring about the state of global energy governance

In this section, I move from describing the data collected to making descriptive inferences. That is, to infer beyond the immediate data about the broader state of global energy governance. This is by design an imperfect process, but as King et al. (1994: Ch. 2) point out, description and descriptive inference are crucial for building theories and undertaking future causal analysis. As described above, to facilitate descriptive inference, this section matches the quantitative data with interview data collected with officials in G20 member states and IOs (Bazeley, 2018). The qualitative data shed light on some of the initial findings, particularly on the focal actor in the domain of energy and on the likely impacts of the G20's steering role.

5.1 How fragmented is global energy governance?

The fragmentation of global governance has become a major source of concern for scholars and policymakers (Biermann et al., 2009), including in the domain of energy where many scholars highlight the fact that there is no one universal organization governing energy, but instead a patchwork of international institutions (Van de Graaf and Colgan, 2016). To consider to what extent this is the case, I use three proxies for fragmentation: the overall number of actors enrolled by the G20 in the domain of energy since 2008; the overall number of actors by issue-area; and the number of actors enrolled to perform similar governance functions in each issue-area.

Over the last decade the G20 has enrolled 43 different actors in the domain of energy. When this data is disaggregated by issue-area, it highlights that the number of actors enrolled in the areas of energy access (22) and energy efficiency (19) are more than twice that of the other three issue-areas. Further in each issue area multiple actors are often enrolled to perform similar governance functions. Indeed, these two issue areas are the only ones where formal IOs, informal IOs, non-state actors and transnational networks have all been tasked to undertake agenda setting activities.

In general fragmentation is considered negatively because it can undermine governance performance and produce legitimacy deficits (Raustiala and Victor, 2004). However, not all fragmentation is bad. For example, some scholars distinguish between conflictive fragmentation characterised by different and largely unrelated institutions with conflicting norms and, more synergistic fragmentation where institutions and core norms are closely integrated and the principal actors are all on the same page (Biermann et al., 2009). While the quantitative data can only highlight signs of fragmentation, many energy officials viewed fragmentation negatively, in large part because of the "risk of duplication and waste" (Interviews 16, 50,). This can be compounded by

competition between actors. Several officials worried that actors focus too much of their efforts on competing with other actors in the same issue area for resources and visibility, rather than on solving problems (Interviews 3, 16, 39). Though as other officials pointed out, “some competition can be good” when actors are competing to develop the best policy ideas (Interview 25).

Indeed when actors share the same goal and are transparent about their actions, synergistic fragmentation is possible (Interview 39). To illustrate, in the issue area of energy access, the G20 enrolled 22 different actors, the highest of any area. This included formal IOs, such as the World Bank, informal IOs, such as Sustainable Energy for All (SE4ALL), and one or two non-state actors, such as Bloomberg New Energy Finance. While international energy officials did lament the duplication among the activities of some of these actors, and the competition that followed (Interviews 40, 44, 47). They also pointed out that since the majority of the actors enrolled in this space share a common goal to increase energy access, which is enshrined in the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the related G20 action plan, this has helped to ameliorate the fragmentation by encouraging some international actors to coordinate their activities (Interview 40).

5.2 Who is the focal actor?

In the absence of a formal world energy organisation the IEA is often viewed as the dominant actor in the domain of energy. The IEA’s position as the focal actor is confirmed by both the quantitative and qualitative data. First in the domain of energy the IEA has been enrolled 36 times, more than any other actor, and almost twice as many times as the next actor the International Energy Forum (IEF), which has been enrolled 20 times. Second, while the quantitative data show that the IEA is the focal actor from the perspective of the G20, it is also confirmed from the perspective of national officials that regularly rely on energy IOs. Numerous officials claimed that “the IEA is seen by most governments as the go to organisation on energy” (Interview 17). Or as another put it, “if you want to see who is the most important actor in the energy domain it is the IEA. Look at who big international bodies like the G20 go to for advice” (Interview 33).

Interestingly, the interview data also raises questions about the IEF’s position as a central actor in the energy domain. Whereas the officials confirmed that G20 member states generally enrol the IEA because of its technical expertise, this is not the case for the IEF. It was pointed out that the IEF is a poorly resourced energy organization, with a very small secretariat based in Riyadh. What then explains its high frequency of enrolment? The explanation appears to be that in a consensus-based body like the G20, “you only need one member state saying we would like this organisation on board and then they are typically included”, which is precisely what Saudi Arabia has done on a regular basis (Interview 43).

If the data is disaggregated further to consider the frequency of actor enrolment by issue area, it is also possible to infer about who the focal actor is in individual issue areas within the domain of energy. In each issue area the focal actor varies considerably. While the IEA is the dominant actor on fossil fuels and renewable energy, in the areas of energy access and energy efficiency, it is SE4ALL and the International Partnership for Energy Efficiency Cooperation (IPEEC) that dominate, with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) unsurprisingly the focal actor in the nuclear area. One further point to highlight here is that despite the creation of the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) in 2009 to advance renewable energy (Van de Graaf, 2013), the IEA remains the most frequently enrolled actor on renewable energy and associated energy transition issues.

Who the focal actor is in the energy domain and across individual issue-areas can have significant implications for global energy governance. Indeed whether it is setting-agendas, setting rules, or implementation and enforcement, who does what matters. For example, in interviews with energy actors, all acknowledged their desire to shape the global agenda on energy, with several formal IOs noting that they work with G20 presidencies up to two years before a G20 summit to help identify issues that will be put on the table for G20 leaders (Interview 22). As one IO official argued, "countries have their own priorities, but we have lots of room to manoeuvre" (Interview 25). And who is setting the agenda can have significant consequences. For example, officials claimed that the agendas of the IEA and IRENA on some issues are "polar opposite" (Interview 53), in part because of their history, mandates and very different memberships. Indeed the creation of IRENA in 2009 was partly a response by some members of the international community to counter the allegedly pro fossil fuel stance of the IEA (Van de Graaf, 2013).

Of course IOs, such as the IEA, are not simply passive actors in enrolment. Many IOs actively seek to be enrolled by the G20. As studies of IOs have shown, like most organizations their goal is to survive and be secure, which generally depends on the ability of an IO to acquire and maintain material resources, such as funding, and symbolic resources, such visibility and relevancy (Barnett and Coleman, 2005, Barnett and Finnemore, 2004, Pfeffer and Salancik, 2003). Hence for IOs, as many officials acknowledged, being enrolled by the G20 is not only an opportunity to increase their relevancy in the eyes of the international community, but also to help secure voluntary contributions for specific tasks, even though G20 work is often unfunded (Interviews 14, 15, 23, 25). This was very much the case for the IEA, which actively used the G20 to raise its global visibility on issues, such as energy access and energy efficiency, given its historical focus on oil (Interviews 15 and 25). Other IOs did the same, such as the OECD, which in the early years of the G20, according to respondents, sought to become the de facto secretariat for the G20 (Interview 48). As I discuss below, these dynamics also affect G20 steering.

5.3 G20 steering

Given the fragmentation of global energy governance, the G20 has been viewed as a means to support and steer international actors (Cooper, 2010, Van de Graaf and Westphal, 2011). In other words, to ensure different institutions in the same issue-area are on the same page. One way it can do so, for example, is by enrolling multiple actors to perform joint governance functions. For example, in 2009, the G20 called upon the IEA, OPEC, the OECD and the World Bank jointly to "provide an analysis of the scope of energy subsidies" (G20, 2009, IEA et al., 2010). As Table 2 shows, G20 steering of this nature is commonplace in the domain of energy. In fact, 55 per cent of cases of enrolment involved steering i.e. more than one actor was tasked to undertake the same governance function.

However, when the data is disaggregated by issue-area it reveals wide variations. As Table 3 shows, for example, the large majority of enrolment involves steering in the issue-areas of fossil fuels and energy efficiency, but steering is less frequent in energy access, renewable energy and nuclear energy. In addition, the data also highlight that some governance functions are more likely to be coordinated than others, with implementation and enforcement, and monitoring and evaluation the only two governance functions where steering represents a majority of all cases of enrolment.

Table 2: G20 steering across issue areas, 2008-2019

	Issue Area					Total
	Fossil fuels	Energy access	Energy efficiency	Renewable energy	Nuclear energy	
Steering by number	53	17	26	11	0	107
Steering as % of cases of enrolments	77.9%	35.4%	57.8%	37.9%	0.0%	54.6%

Table 3: G20 steering across governance functions, 2008-2019

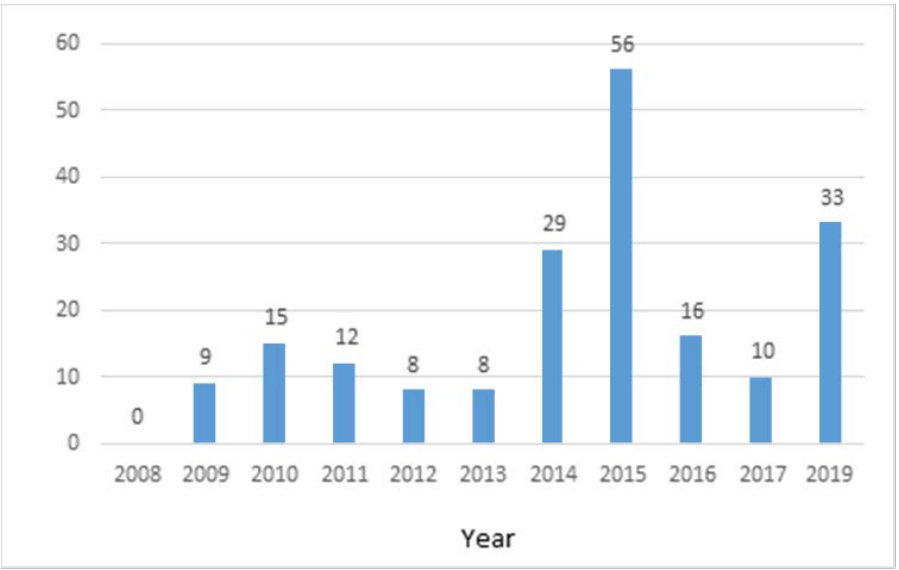
	Governance function					Total
	Agenda-setting	Rule-setting	Implementation & enforcement	Monitoring evaluation	Capacity building	
Steering by number	79	4	27	12	14	136
Steering as % of cases of enrolments	52.0%	57.1%	65.9%	63.2%	35.0%	52.5%

How can these findings be interpreted? First, the data suggest that G20 member states see a need to steer third party actors. This was confirmed in interviews with member state and IO officials alike who argued that this "is something that the G 20 can do and it is part of its role" (Interview 6), and as another claimed, "jointly tasking IOs is a very good way to improve coordination" (Interview). Second however, steering can lead to "conflicting messages" if, for example, two IOs are tasked to devise an energy transition plan and "one says to a country you should consider renewables and another says gas – they get confused" (Interview 38). Third, steering can produce competition. For instance, several IO officials claimed that the "G20 creates competition when it asks multiple IOs to work together on an issue" (Interview 53). This is because they may start to compete for the material and symbolic resources described above. This was confirmed in interviews with officials who pointed out that "there is quite a bit of competition between IOs about how many times the G20 countries asked them to do something" (Interview 39), which is "partly driven by resourcing" (Interview 42). In short, the qualitative data confirms the G20's steering tendencies, but it also raises questions about the implications of tasking multiple actors to perform similar governance functions.

5.4 Temporal dimension

The quantitative data also shed light on how the patterns of global energy governance have changed over the last decade. As Figure 2 shows, the one evident pattern is that since the G20 was elevated to a leaders' summit it has enrolled third parties in the domain of energy every year, except for 2008 when the focus was almost exclusively on addressing the global financial crisis. It is also noticeable that cases of enrolment spiked in 2014 and 2015, and again in 2019. This likely reflects the fact that 2014 was the first time that G20 leaders had a dedicated discussion on global energy governance and subsequently agreed on the so-called "principles on energy collaboration" (Downie, 2015). As part of the principles, G20 leaders agreed to work together on a range of areas including improving energy efficiency and energy access, two issue areas that were subsequently made part of the SDGs in 2015 and which the G20 announced energy action plans on in 2014 on energy efficiency, and in 2015 on energy access (G20, 2014). Indeed if the data is disaggregated further to consider the frequency of enrolment by issue area over time, both these issue areas comprise almost 100 per cent of cases of enrolment in these two years. In 2019, Japan's G20 presidency put hydrogen on the G20 agenda for the first time, accounting for the rise in the number of cases.

Figure 2: Number of enrolments, 2008-2019



Further the data also show only limited variations in the frequency of actor type enrolled by the G20 in the domain of energy over the last decade. As discussed, while the vast majority of actors enrolled by the G20 are formal IOs, since 2014 the G20 has increasingly enrolled informal IOs. This result seems to support the arguments of IO scholars that states are using informal IOs more and more in international relations (Vabulas and Snidal, 2013, Roger, 2020). The question is why? A range of hypotheses for the increased use of informal IOs have been advanced, drawing on functionalist, power-based or domestic political explanations in the literature (Roger, 2020). In this case, two functional explanations seem plausible. First, and most simply, it could reflect the availability of IOs. A closer look at the data shows that the increased enrolment of informal IOs after 2014 were mostly in two new issue areas for the G20, energy efficiency and energy access, which traditionally have not been areas that the dominant formal IOs, such as the IEA, worked in, though this is changing (Downie, 2020). Hence given the costs associated with establishing new formal governance arrangements, the G20 turned to informal and flexible arrangements. Second, and related, some scholars have suggested that different issues areas with different underlying cooperation problems may be addressed with different levels of institutional formality (Vabulas and Snidal, 2013). Certainly issues areas, such as energy efficiency, pose very different cooperation problems, than those associated with fossil fuels, which may also explain the rise in the enrolment of informal IOs. Whether other explanations provide part of the answer, such as the changing international balance of power in the international system, with the rise of China, India and Brazil, remain the province of future research. Finally, the temporal data also suggest that the G20 has showed a willingness to enrol transnational actors since 2013. In fact, of the 16 cases in which the G20 enrolled a transnational actor, such as the Biofuture Platform in the issue area of renewable energy, all took place after 2013. Nevertheless, G20 links to formal and informal IOs still dwarf any with non-state actors or transnational networks.

6. Conclusion

Despite the burgeoning literature on indirect governance at the global level, the domain of energy has been understudied. While scholars have frequently identified the G20 as an actor capable of enrolling and steering actors across fragmented policy domains, to date there has been no systematic study of the range of actors linked to the G20 and the governance functions they are performing. Drawing on new quantitative data, this paper attempts to address this gap in the literature. Further, by matching the quantitative data with qualitative data gleaned from primary interviews, it also seeks to make descriptive inferences about the state of global energy governance.

The data reveal important findings. First, in answer to the question, who governs? The data highlight that of the 196 times that the G20 enrolled third parties in the domain of energy over the last decade, the large majority have been formal IOs, which represent 65 per cent, followed by informal IOs, which represent 25 per cent. It is only in recent years that the G20 has begun to enrol a small number of non-state actors and transnational networks. Second, the data also highlight that these actors are most frequently enrolled to perform what might be considered softer governance functions, such as agenda-setting which is the most frequent governance function, whereas other governance activities, such as rule-setting are much less frequent.

This, of course, is only half the story. When the quantitative data is matched with the qualitative data important patterns can be inferred about the nature of global energy governance. Descriptive inference of this kind can also provide a basis for future theory building and causal analysis (King et al., 1994). Three patterns are worth highlighting that should provide fruitful avenues for future research. First, the data reveal that global energy governance is fragmented, with 43 different actors engaged in energy governance over the last decade. However, it also suggests that future scholarship needs to explore the wide variations across issue areas, through in-depth empirical work. For example, many more actors were enrolled in the area of energy access than in fossil fuels or renewable energy.

Second, the data confirm the view in the literature that in the absence of a world energy organization, the IEA is as close as it gets (Florini, 2011). In fact, the IEA has been enrolled by the G20 more than any other actor in the domain of energy. However, when the data is disaggregated across issue areas this finding does not hold. Different actors tend to dominate different issue areas. For example, while the IEA dominates the area of fossil fuels, IPEEC dominates energy efficiency, and SE4All dominates energy access. Future research could examine the implications of variations in focal actors across issue areas. For example, the qualitative data indicates that changes in the focal actor could have significant impacts on the agendas being set.

Finally, the data also reveal that the G20 does play a steering role by enrolling multiple actors to perform similar governance functions. Again, the extent to which it does so varies across issue areas. However, the most interesting finding is not that the G20

clearly sees a need to steer the raft of actors that populate the energy domain, but that its attempts to do so could do as much harm as good. This was highlighted by multiple respondents that suggested that G20 attempts at steering can produce competition as actors struggle for resources and visibility. This is consistent with previous studies on the role of non-state actors (Cooley and Ron, 2002) and suggests the need for further scholarship to explore under what conditions steering leads to competition versus more cooperative outcomes.

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