

# An Analysis of the Rio +20 Discourse Using an Ability Expectation Lens: the global impact on the health of marginalized groups

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**Introduction**

- The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio +20) aimed to create solutions to current global environmental issues
- The Rio +20 discourse is the discussion amongst academic and non-academic parties regarding the conference
- Ableism: the sentiment that certain abilities are perceived as essential; within a discourse certain abilities can be portrayed as necessary while others are discussed in less critical, or even in negative terms

**Purpose**

- identify abilities portrayed as essential in the Rio +20 discourse
- analyze ability expectation impact
- reveal any discrimination and marginalization of certain groups

**Methods**

- Data collection from November 2011– August 2012;
- Academic documents from EBSCO–All; JSTOR; SCOPUS; Web of Science; Web of Knowledge; Geos and Google Scholar; non-academic sources from Canadian Newsstand online database, Google and IISD.ca newsfeeds;
- For deciding which articles to use we employed Knowledge Share ver. 2.1.3 (Ksv2), developed by Dean Yergens (<http://people.ucalgary.ca/~dyergens/ksv2.htm>);
- 250 relevant articles found;
- Using Adobe Acrobat, a code hit count was generated;
- Atlas.ti 6.27 was used for in-depth coding and thematic analysis;

The following abilities are portrayed as essential in the Rio +20 discourse	
<u>Accessibility</u>	Access to water and sanitation, food, healthcare, natural resources, technology, energy, education, and justice Access for marginalized groups
<u>The ability to hold someone or something accountable</u>	“Corporations must be held accountable to the highest binding standards, the rule of law, and public and civil society oversight.” (1)
<u>The ability to create and innovate</u>	Create: 1) laws and legislation, 2) “innovations in production and consumption” (2) 3) new institutions and governing bodies, 4) new clean energy technologies, and 5) employment
<u>The ability to produce and consume</u>	“However, it exposed the reality that the ‘north’ remains unwilling to modify its patterns of resource use and consumption, while the developing and under-developed countries continue to refuse to be lectured by the ‘north’.” (3)
<u>The ability to work together</u>	“The transition to a green economy is both a global and a national movement, where cooperation and coordination are paramount.” (4)
<u>The ability to control and lead</u>	2931 hits for govern* Desire for multidisciplinary, multilevel, and subnational governments
<u>The ability to provide monetary support</u>	International funding from developed nations is portrayed as essential “With financial help from the rich countries” (5)
<u>The ability to enhance</u>	The ability to enhance is discussed as necessary; there are three areas which need improvement: 1) Environment 2) Communication 3) Human Wellbeing
<u>The ability to learn and be educated</u>	Sharing lessons learned, learning new skills, education on sustainable development Education is discussed on par with health: “improving access to education and reducing child mortality.” (6)
<u>The ability to work/be employed</u>	Labour is discussed on par with food security and health “Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon today stressed the need to find ways to stimulate the global economy and create jobs” (7)
<u>The ability to quantify progress</u>	Measuring and assessing progress A new measurement to replace GDP as measurement of wellbeing
<u>The ability to engage/participate</u>	Universal participation, including women, civil society, private firms, and youth
<u>The ability to be well</u>	Integrate wellbeing as a goal of the green economy Sustain environmental health for human wellbeing

Table 1. Hit Count of Codes							
		Academic (Source: Knowledge Share, 101 docs)	Academic: (Source: Google Scholar, 72 docs)	Non-Academic (Source: Google, 41 docs)	Non-Academic (Source: Canadian Newsstand, 44 docs)	Non-Academic (Source: New York Times, 16 docs)	
Account	Account	46 docs, 146 hits	36 docs, 233 hits	15 docs, 72 hits	41 docs, 44 hits	15 docs, 51 hits	
	Access	50 docs, 291 hits	40 docs, 274 hits	17 docs, 70 hits	1 doc, 1 hit	7 docs, 7 hits	
	“Create and Innovate”	46 docs, 183 hits	39 docs, 209 hits	12 docs, 43 hits	6 docs, 9 hits	7 docs, 11 hits	
“Consumerism”	Innovate	0	3 docs, 11 hits	0	0	0	
	Invent	12 docs, 22 hits	12 docs, 18 hits	0	2 docs, 2 hits	0	
	Consum* Produc*	40 docs, 320 hits 28 docs, 333 hits	27 docs, 393 hits 56 docs, 866 hits	13 docs, 100 hits 18 docs, 116 hits	7 doc, 18 hits 16 docs, 25 hits	2 docs, 4 hits 12 docs, 33 hits	
“Work Together”	Collaborat* Cooperat*	29 docs, 77 hits 41 docs, 254 hits	21 docs, 51 hits 21 docs, 162 hits	9 doc, 16 hit 13 docs, 53 hits	0 3 docs, 3 hits	1 doc, 1 hit 3 docs, 4 hits	
	Dialogue	19 docs, 60 hits	20 docs, 69 hits	12 docs, 27 hits	1 doc, 1 hit	1 doc, 1 hit	
	Communicat*	27 docs, 96 hits	18 docs, 51 hits	6 docs, 15 hits	2 docs, 2 hits	0	
“Control”	Control	29 docs, 115 hits	23 docs, 136 hits	6 docs, 11 hits	5 docs, 5 hits	5 docs, 5 hits	
	Manage	36 docs, 221 hits	52 docs, 505 hits	28 docs, 108 hits	9 docs, 13 hits	4 docs, 15 hits	
	Govern	32 docs, 987 hits	61 docs, 1673 hits	21 docs, 260 hits	35 docs, 79 hits	11 docs, 44 hits	
“Monetary Support”	Fund	41 docs, 254 hits	40 docs, 466 hits	12 docs, 57 hits	3 docs, 5 hits	5 docs, 6 hits	
	Finance	21 docs, 46 hits	22 docs, 245 hits	13 docs, 37 hits	3 docs, 3 hits	3 docs, 3 hits	
“Leadership”	Leader*	44 docs, 146 hits	34 docs, 137 hits	25 docs, 46 hits	24 docs, 58 hits	9 docs, 30 hits	
	“Enhancement”	Enhance	37 docs, 94 hits	29 docs, 87 hits	6 docs, 28 hits	0	0
		Strengthen	10 docs, 48 hits	15 docs, 96 hits	9 docs, 11 hits	3 docs, 4 hits	2 docs, 3 hits
Capacity building	Improve	41 docs, 134 hits	38 docs, 194 hits	7 docs, 31 hits	5 docs, 8 hits	2 docs, 2 hits	
	Capacity building	20 docs, 26 hits	19 docs, 66 hits	10 docs, 17 hits	0	0	
	Educate	3 docs, 9 hits	2 docs, 10 hits	2 docs, 2 hits	0	0	
“Education”	Learn	30 docs, 122 hits	29 docs, 86 hits	22 docs, 46 hits	2 docs, 2 hits	2 docs, 2 hits	
	“Employment”	Employ*	13 docs, 68 hits	21 docs, 187 hits	7 docs, 13 hits	1 doc, 1 hit	2 docs, 2 hits
		Job	20 docs, 42 hits	16 docs, 156 hits	12 docs, 41 hits	7 docs, 18 hits	1 doc, 1 hit
“Quantify”	Labour	11 docs, 23 hits	14 docs, 105 hits	17 docs, 23 hits	1 doc, 1 hit	0	
	Measure	42 docs, 217 hits	30 docs, 319 hits	8 docs, 45 hits	3 docs, 5 hits	2 docs, 3 hits	
	Calculate	3 docs, 6 hits	5 docs, 20 hits	0	0	1 doc, 1 hit	
“Involvement”	Assess	41 docs, 211 hits	36 docs, 208 hits	10 docs, 25 hits	4 docs, 4 hits	1 doc, 1 hit	
	Particip*	47 docs, 285 hits	29 docs, 216 hits	21 docs, 82 hits	6 docs, 12 hits	2 docs, 2 hits	
	Engag*	35 docs, 148 hits	38 docs, 199 hits	21 docs, 50 hits	2 docs, 2 hits	0	
“Human welfare”	Welfare	9 docs, 18 hits	11 docs, 33 hits	4 docs, 7 hits	2 docs, 2 hits	0	
	Wellbeing	11 docs, 32 hits	9 docs, 23 hits	3 docs, 10 hits	1 doc, 2 hits	0	
	Well-being	16 docs, 47 hits	19 docs, 43 hits	5 docs, 9 hits	2 docs, 2 hits	0	
Livelihood	Well being	20 docs, 32 hits	24 docs, 74 hits	5 docs, 10 hits	2 docs, 2 hits	0	
	Livelihood	13 docs, 44 hits	26 docs, 93 hits	4 docs, 17 hits	1 doc, 1 hit	0	

**Discussion**

Overall the favoured abilities within the discourse are discussed in holistic and inclusive ways, with a few exceptions:

- The ability to control is apparent throughout the discourse; other abilities are explored in terms of needing control and management
- The ability to control and lead are seen as essential, yet it is clear that not every individual or group is appropriate to fulfill these roles; this may lead to marginalization of groups who will be controlled without having the ability to control
- Labour and education are both discussed alongside health and wellbeing. The ability to work and be educated are portrayed as essential. This may lead to discrimination of those without the ability to learn or work

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