



Routledge Studies in Sustainable Development

ACHIEVING THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

GLOBAL GOVERNANCE CHALLENGES

Edited by

Simon Dalby, Susan Horton and Rianne Mahon,
with Diana Thomaz



Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals

This book draws on the expertise of faculty and colleagues at the Balsillie School of International Affairs to both locate the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a contribution to the development of global government and to examine the political-institutional and financial challenges posed by the SDGs.

The contributors are experts in global governance issues in a broad variety of fields ranging from health, food systems, social policy, migration and climate change. An introductory chapter sets out the broad context of the governance challenges involved, and how individual chapters contribute to the analysis. The book begins by focusing on individual SDGs, examining briefly the background to the particular goal and evaluating the opportunities and challenges (particularly governance challenges) in achieving the goal, as well as discussing how this goal relates to other SDGs. The book goes on to address the broader issues of achieving the set of goals overall, examining the novel financing mechanisms required for an enterprise of this nature, the trade-offs involved (particularly between the urgent climate agenda and the social/economic goals), the institutional arrangements designed to enable the achievement of the goals and offering a critical perspective on the enterprise as a whole.

Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals makes a distinctive contribution by covering a broad range of individual goals with contributions from experts on governance in the global climate, social and economic areas as well as providing assessments of the overall project – its financial feasibility, institutional requisites, and its failures to tackle certain problems at the core. This book will be of great interest to scholars and students of international affairs, development studies and sustainable development, as well as those engaged in policymaking nationally, internationally and those working in NGOs.

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Foreword

John Ravenhill

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted by the UN General Assembly in September 2015, built on decades of multilateral co-operation in the promotion of economic development. They were the culmination of three years of intensive high-level negotiations to define successors to the Millennium Development Goals. They built on unprecedented consultations with civil society actors and members of the public from almost all the UN member states. No one could accuse the global community of lacking in ambition in setting out 17 broad goals to be addressed through meeting no less than 169 individual targets by 2030. For the first time, the global community attempted to produce an action agenda that provided a coherent integration of diverse development issues. In doing so, it elevated sustainability to the forefront of the international agenda, a recognition that in the era of the Anthropocene a lack of progress on global environmental issues threatens to undermine progress in all other areas of human development.

When the Balsillie School of International Affairs (BSIA) was contemplating a publication to celebrate its tenth anniversary, a project on the SDGs was an obvious candidate to showcase the research of its faculty and students. The School was established in 2007 thanks to generous gifts from Mr. Jim Balsillie, co-founder of Research in Motion (later renamed after its best-known product, Blackberry). The School is a partnership between two universities – the University of Waterloo, and Wilfrid Laurier University – and a public policy think tank, the Centre for International Governance Innovation (CIGI), which gives it a unique structure. A separately constituted not-for-profit corporation, the School was intended to be an academic complement to the think tank that Jim Balsillie had also founded, providing graduate training and conducting high quality research. The Balsillie funding supports students in the graduate programs that the School hosts, and it provided academic leadership to the new School through a dozen senior appointments to research chairs (the CIGI Chairs Program, seven of whom have contributed to this publication).

The collaborating institutions bring to BSIA different but complementary strengths, roles, and responsibilities. The two universities employ BSIA faculty and offer BSIA's academic programs while CIGI, as a think tank, uses its in-house expertise and its worldwide network of practitioners to help inform and

guide BSIA's outreach and collaborative research. The unique integration of the collaborating institutions' approaches and cultures gives BSIA an unmatched ability to promote vigorous engagement across boundaries of discipline and practice, to connect today's experts with tomorrow's leaders in critical debate and analysis, and to achieve – in all of its work – the highest standards of excellence.

In the decade since its foundation, the BSIA has quickly established itself as a leading international institution for graduate training and research in global governance and international public policy. With the completion in 2011 of the construction of the award-winning CIGI campus, where the BSIA is housed, the School's development accelerated. Enrolments in the multi-disciplinary graduate programs that the School hosts for its two university partners have grown significantly, the School currently admitting around 50 Master's students and 12 doctoral students each year. The School has established a number of exchange arrangements with leading universities in Asia, Australia, and Europe. The relationship established with Global Affairs Canada, through which our students write policy papers for the department's Foreign Policy Bureau, provides a unique opportunity for graduate students to participate in the policy-making process.

More than 60 faculty from its 2 partner universities are involved in the School's graduate programs: a further 25 are affiliated with its wide-ranging research activities. To better define its research agenda, the School has established seven research clusters. These co-ordinate events and faculty and student research in the areas of conflict and security; environment and resources; global political economy; indigenous peoples decolonization and the globe; migration, mobilities and social politics; multilateral institutions; and science and health policy. The clusters have helped to promote collaboration across the three partners and to build links with areas in the universities not traditionally associated with the School.

The School, which now hosts more than 120 events each year, has created a lively research climate and community. In support of its research strategy, the School has also hosted a number of major research centres and international projects: the Canadian Network for Research on Terrorism, Security and Society (TSAS), the International Migration Research Centre (IMRC), the Centre for Sustainable Food Systems, and the Secretariat of the Academic Council on the United Nations System; the Armageddon Letters; the Canadian Network for Defence and Security Analysis; and the Hungry Cities Partnership.¹ One of the things in which the School takes particular pride is involving graduate students in its research projects. A notable feature of the current book is that five of its authors are current or past PhD students or postdoctoral scholars at the School.

The SDGs mirror the ambitious mission statement of the School: "to develop new solutions to humanity's critical problems, improve how the world is governed now and in the future, and contribute to enhancing the quality of people's lives". The SDGs map neatly onto the School's research clusters.

The contributions to this book reflect some of the work from the clusters. It covers many of the highest profile SDGs, notably climate action, quality education, gender equality, zero hunger, and good health and well-being. And, the inter-relationship between many of the SDGs makes it impossible for the authors to discuss these goals meaningfully without touching on others such as reduced inequalities, sustainable cities and communities, and peace, justice and strong institutions. A book on the SDGs would be incomplete without an analysis of the broader issues that will influence their implementation, most fundamentally the challenges involved in raising sufficient funds to finance the ambitious agenda. These challenges are detailed in the second part of the book.

Inevitably, compromises were required to bring a set of complex negotiations to a successful conclusion. As our authors point out, even with its lengthy list of goals and specific targets *The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* contains significant omissions. In addition, although the framers of the agreement displayed an unprecedented sensitivity to the inter-relationships between the multiple targets, important questions remained unaddressed as to whether some goals can be met without undermining progress towards the realization of others. Finally, there were inevitably questions of whether the voluntary process of compliance was an effective one. These pitted critics who favoured a more radical transformative agenda against pragmatists who believed that the agreement was the best that could be achieved in the circumstances, that it would concentrate international attention on the development agenda, and that the soft law approach of monitoring and information sharing was the only practical means of attempting to induce compliance.

The year 2015 may well be the high spot for internationalism in the first quarter of the twenty-first century. Not only was agreement reached on the SDGs but three months later the international community also signed the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. This volume celebrates these achievements but, in identifying unresolved issues, points the way forward for further research and action.

The School is particularly grateful to Alan Whiteside for having suggested this project and to Simon Dalby, Susan Horton, Rianne Mahon, and Diana Thomaz for all their work in bringing it to a successful conclusion.

Note

- 1 To find out more please visit www.balsillieschool.ca/research/. Accessed 12 December 2018.

1 Global governance challenges in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals

Introduction

Simon Dalby, Susan Horton and Rianne Mahon

Introduction

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were officially adopted in September 2015 by the United Nations General Assembly. With 17 goals and 169 targets, they are, by any standard, an ambitious list of aspirational statements. This attempt at agenda setting for the globe is not one that sets out to maintain the status quo, to manage existing practices and procedures better, or to co-ordinate incremental changes. As the title of the official United Nations agenda document signals, it aims at nothing less than “Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”.

The theme of transformation is important in what follows because the agenda laid out by the goals clearly requires fundamental changes to numerous societal practices and rapid innovation across diverse societies. It is not, as much of the United Nations Security Council activity frequently is, simply responding to events to mitigate suffering or to attenuate conflict. It is about much more than traditional themes of international relations, the rivalries of great powers, the dangers of conflict, the co-ordination difficulties of international trade, or the protection of human rights. This is an altogether more ambitious set of aspirations and one that, because it tackles so many facets of human life, is more properly considered a matter of global governance rather than the more narrowly focused “high politics” of diplomacy, competition, and rivalry in traditional international relations. As such this volume addresses these questions explicitly in terms of governance broadly construed.

The Goals require co-ordination and administration across sectors and societies presenting those charged with its implementation unprecedented governance tasks over a 15-year period. It is heady stuff full of universal ambition, but its implementation will depend on states in very different contexts, tackling these issues in their own particular ways. As the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, finalized three months later, emphasized, universal aspirations are to be accomplished in particular ways in the specific situations that applied to particular states (Falkner 2016). As such, given the lack of overarching authority, enforcement mechanisms, or legal arrangements in the Goals program, governance is more about legitimacy, accountability, the mobilization of technical

capabilities, and popular support than it is about traditional modes of state command and control.

While the role of states is obviously a key part of the process, the larger co-ordination, monitoring, reporting, and implementing functions will, the Goals' authors hope, incorporate more actors into a revitalized "Global Partnership for Sustainable Development". Led by activists and functionaries in numerous institutions – the modern missionaries (Freston, Chapter 10) – operating at multiple scales, such partnerships are to advocate and innovate to transform societies through sustainable and inclusive economic growth. Given the multitudinous technical processes and academic disciplines involved, the administrative tasks are enormously complex. Nor is there reason to believe that the Goals are necessarily compatible with one another. The governance challenges include continuing political contestation over priorities and identification of appropriate indicators. Moreover, funding new initiatives is, in light of the history of inadequate supply of foreign aid and investment from developed states (see Horton, Chapter 13), a problem for many of the Goals.

Nonetheless, for all the difficulties with the formulation and the implementation of the Goals, they represent a major milestone in the emergence of what is now properly called global governance (Zürn 2018). Putting them in this context requires first looking back over the last couple of decades and their emergence from the prior programs of development. Some of the difficulties in previous arrangements were the stimulus for the process which led to the SDGs. This introduction also offers a broad sketch of the difficulties of implementation of the SDGs to identify some of the dilemmas addressed in greater detail in later chapters. Given the huge agenda not all aspects of the SDGs can be investigated within the covers of one volume. What this book does offer is a series of chapters focused on important aspects of the SDGs. It does so, reflecting the inter-disciplinary ethos of the Balsillie School, with its emphasis on tackling global governance issues from a variety of intellectual viewpoints.

Beyond the MDGs

The SDGs follow the original Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in the choice of governance technique – agenda-setting through selection of a set of common goals and targets, supplemented by indicators to monitor progress. Yet the SDGs go well beyond the MDGs in important respects. While the MDGs focused on the Global South, the SDGs are universal. As Razavi (2016, 28) notes,

The 2030 Agenda's universal application means that it is not merely "our agenda" for "them".... Rather it is a global template for a world that is increasingly integrated through flows of finance and people, in which poverty, deprivation, inequality ... and unsustainable patterns of production and consumption, are as much a concern in the rich advanced economies as they are in the developing world.

More specifically, the MDGs aimed to halve the number of people living in extreme poverty, defined as a daily income less than US\$1.25 a day. This absolute measure offered a narrow definition that fails to take into account other important aspects of well-being (Deacon 2014, 27), while also ignoring the very real, if “relative”, poverty experienced in wealthier parts of the world. Although SDG 1 retains this absolute definition of poverty, its second target introduces a relative definition (“to reduce at least by half the proportion of men, women and children ... living in poverty in all its dimensions *according to national definitions*” [UNGA 2015, 15, emphasis added]). SDG 1 also reiterates the commitment to implementing the global social protection floor undertaken by UN agencies, member states, the development banks, and key international NGOs in 2013.¹ More importantly, the SDGs go beyond a focus on poverty to include a stand-alone goal on the reduction of inequality within and among countries: in other words, the SDGs promise to tackle the unequal distribution of resources globally and at the national scale. Whereas the MDGs effectively sidelined the Education for All (EFA) agenda that focused on education quality, early childhood education, secondary education, adult literacy, and attention to marginalised and vulnerable populations (Fukuda-Parr, Yamin, and Greenstein 2014, 110), SDG 4 embraced the EFA coalition’s position (Unterhalter 2019). More broadly, whereas the MDGs focused on a limited set of social priorities, the SDGs aim to encompass a richer definition of social goals and to simultaneously address economic, social, and environmental dimensions of development on a global scale.

The adoption of such a potentially transformative global agenda was not, however, a foregone conclusion. The initial vision for post-2015 was more along the lines of an MDG + 1 (Fukuda-Parr and Hegstad 2018). The 2010 High-Level Plenary of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) on the MDGs had requested the Secretary General to initiate thinking on a post-2015 development agenda. This launched a process involving 90 national consultations, 11 thematic consultations, an online platform (The World We Want 2015) and MYWorld, a survey that included people from over 190 countries (Kamau, Chasek, and O’Connor 2018, 82–83). The Secretary General also established a UN System Task Team and a High-Level Panel on Post-2015, co-chaired by the then-prime minister of the UK, and the presidents of Indonesia and Liberia. While the Task Team’s report, “Realizing the Future We Want for All” (UNDESA 2012), highlighted a number of the MDG’s lacunae,² the High-Level Panel’s report, *A New Global Partnership: Eradicate Poverty and Transform Economies Through Sustainable Development* (2013), favoured an approach that built on the MDGs (Fukuda-Parr and McNeill 2019).

While the post-2015 process was unfolding, preparations were being made for the UN Conference on the Environment (Rio + 20). In light of the failure of the Copenhagen Climate Conference, Colombian Paula Caballero Gómez³ persuaded the organizers to opt for “an open, inclusive and transparent” process (Kamau, Chasek, and O’Connor 2018, 40). The Open Working Group (OWG),⁴ established by the UNGA in 2013, was charged with developing a sustainable development agenda through discussions with member states and representatives

of the nine major groups.⁵ It was only at the UNGA Special Event, September 2013, that the two processes were merged and the OWG's approach for negotiating the goals was adopted. This meant that the SDGs would be developed through dialogue that included a range of non-state actors, in marked contrast to the MDGs, which emerged from a narrow technocratic process that reflected donor country priorities (Fukuda-Parr and Hulme 2011). The choice of this channel also favoured the adoption of the principle of universality.⁶

Forces favouring an MDG+1 agenda continued to try to influence the outcome. For instance, the African Group expressed concern that the SDGs would divert resources from the MDGs, which had still to be met especially in the least developed countries. The UN Secretary-General and the president of the General Assembly also feared that the MDGs could be submerged in the SDGs (Kamau, Chasek, and O'Connor 2018, 98). Among others, the Australia, Dutch, and UK troika favoured continuing the MDGs' focus on the eradication of extreme poverty. In addition,

some developed countries were concerned about the SDGs being a "universal" agenda. They were not comfortable with the United Nations prescribing what they had to accomplish, and they much preferred the existing system, where they engaged in development activities in developing countries and were not held accountable by the United Nations for sustainable development at home.

(Kamau, Chasek, and O'Connor 2018, 111)

Throughout the discussions, one of the important issues of contention was whether and how to incorporate inequality. In Latin America, the "pink tide" of leftist governments had made tackling inequality a key objective, while the 2008 financial crisis and its aftermath, including the protests of groups like Occupy Wall Street, helped shed light on deepening inequality in the North. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) two reports – *Growing Unequal: Income Distribution and Poverty in OECD Countries* (2008) and *Divided We Stand: Why Inequality Keeps Rising* (2011) – provided documentary evidence supporting the protesters' claims as did Piketty's *Capital in the Twenty-first Century* (2014). Addressing the root causes of inequality was also seen as a central task coming out of the Rio+20 meetings. What drove the point home for the OWG, however, was Joseph Stiglitz's keynote address at the 2014 round table, which highlighted the fact that in the US 95 per cent of the income gains since 2009 had accrued to the richest 1 per cent (Kamau, Chasek, and O'Connor 2018, 94).

A standalone goal on inequality within and between countries remained contentious until the end, with China and the G77 in favour and many OECD countries opposed (Fukuda-Parr 2018).⁷ While the post-2015 consultations had underlined the importance of tackling vertical (the concentration of wealth at the top) and horizontal (exclusion of the poor and vulnerable from developing their capabilities) inequality, the High-Level Panel's final report focused on the

latter by embracing the concept “leave no one behind”.⁸ In addition, the World Bank succeeded in making its definition of inequality – focused on the absolute income growth of the bottom 40 per cent while ignoring the increased concentration of wealth in the top 1 per cent – the target for SDG 10.1. This bias is reproduced in the choice of indicators for Goal 10, none of which capture trends in the distribution of income within and between countries (Fukuda-Parr 2019).

Inequality may have been the Achilles’ heel of the MDGs. Few can argue against a goal of reducing poverty, and reducing poverty is a key aim of some international organizations, for example “(t)he overarching mission of the World Bank Group is a world free of poverty” (World Bank 2013, 9). Despite criticism, and the rather arcane way that the \$1.25-a-day poverty yardstick was developed, the MDGs were accompanied by other dimensions of poverty reduction, exemplified by the improvements in primary school enrolment, and reductions in child and maternal mortality rates as well as stunting (United Nations 2015). At the same time, it proved extremely difficult to reach the “Bottom Billion” (Collier 2007) who are in conflict situations, fragile states, or highly marginalized in more stable countries.

Reducing inequality is tricky enough within countries due to opposing interests, and international governance aimed at doing so internationally is extremely weak. Overall, global inequality among individuals decreased slightly (or at least did not increase) over the early period of the MDGs according to Lakner and Milanovic’s (2013) painstaking analysis of data for 1988 to 2008. This was largely due to substantial growth in both India and China which were categorized as low-income countries at the start of this period. However, this growth was accompanied by (possibly even at the expense of) virtual stagnation of incomes of those at the 85th percentile in the global distribution of income, largely blue-collar workers in the high-income countries.

A growing body of research (particularly by the World Inequality Lab participants, see, for example, Alvaredo *et al.* [2018]) suggests that income distribution within the high-income countries has worsened over the past two decades, particularly at the very top. Some of this is affected by a lack of political will domestically, by permitting devices such as trusts and by not utilizing instruments such as inheritance taxes (Piketty 2014). Global competition has also led to a “race to the bottom” in terms of declining taxes on corporations and reduction in income tax rates on high earners. This is also exacerbated by technological developments which have allowed international corporations to utilize loopholes in international policy co-ordination on taxation and financial regulations. The FANG (Facebook, Amazon, Netflix, and Google) and other similar beneficiaries of a globalized, tech-intensive system utilize perfectly legal disjoints between national policies to, for example, headquarter their global international property rights in Ireland, and by means of devices such as the “double Irish” and “Dutch sandwich” to move profits to Bermuda and similar jurisdictions (Kahn 2018). Initiatives are underway such as BEPS (Base Erosion and Profit Sharing) by the European Union (OECD 2018), and tightening regulations on banking havens to disclose previously secret information on accounts, but much

less quickly than international corporations can transfer funds. The end result has been initiatives by private individuals to expose what is happening by creating leaks such as the Panama Papers (ICIJ 2017b) and the Paradise Papers (ICIJ 2017a). Given the vested interests involved, dealing with these forces favouring inequality will be an extremely thorny issue for the SDGs.

There were other contentious issues. The concerns of some important groups, notably migrants (see Crush, Chapter 6), and indigenous peoples received scant attention, while the states of the North managed to keep other issues – such as tax evasion and regional and bilateral trade agreements – off the agenda. Several African and Middle Eastern countries opposed inclusion of LGBTQ and sexual and reproductive rights, while the Nordic countries championed the latter.⁹ The compromise is reflected in the wording of Target 5.5:

ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights *as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences.*

(UNGA 2015, 18, emphasis in original)

Unterhalter (2019) documents the efforts of the EFA movement, advocating a comprehensive approach to education against, inter alia, Jeffrey Sachs' Sustainable Development Solutions Network, which focused on learning outcomes for children and youth. As she notes, while Goal 4 ostensibly embraces quality education and the promotion of lifelong learning opportunities for all, the indicators chosen undermine these progressive objectives. Blay-Palmer and Young (Chapter 2) note the disjuncture between the ambitions behind Goal 2's targets and the indicators chosen.¹⁰ More broadly, building on the growing body of literature on "governance by numbers",¹¹ Fukuda-Parr and McNeill (forthcoming) are critical of the ways in which quantification too often distorts, or even perverts, goal achievement.

There are also concerns about the SDGs' reliance on the private sector, which is not surprising given the latter's access to numerous avenues of influencing the outcome. Thus, Razavi (2016, 28) notes that:

The corporate sector ... has been in a far more privileged position to influence the agenda, not only through its own Major Group (Business and Industry) but also through key bodies and channels such as the Secretary-General's High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Agenda and the Global Compact, while also having a voice through the intergovernmental process.

The UN's turn to the private sector can be traced back to the 1990s (Bidegain Ponte and Rodríguez Enríquez 2016, 90–91). Horton and Weber (Chapter 13 and Chapter 14), however, both argue that private sector involvement is key to financing the SDGs.

SDG implementation

Implementation of the goals is to a very substantial extent a matter of governance and co-ordination among numerous agencies, but in a context where national governments are key to success. This set of goals is a relatively novel effort in global governance, and as such represents a departure from top-down regulation or market-based approaches. In contrast, “the SDGs promise a novel type of governance that makes use of non-legally binding, global goals set by the UN member states” (Biermann, Kanie, and Kim 2017). Four key points follow from this innovation. First, as the goals are not legally binding, there is no mechanism to enforce compliance. Second, although the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development is a novel arrangement replacing the earlier Commission on Sustainable Development, the institutional arrangements for implementation and oversight at the intergovernmental level are weak because the implementation process of the SDGs is conducted by voluntary national initiatives. The High-Level Forum convenes periodic United Nations meetings to monitor progress, and it can highlight shortcomings and failure to reach promised targets, but the key to successful implementation are bottom-up initiatives with partnerships between stakeholders within countries and with international organizations. Third, the SDGs were agreed to by a preliminary goal-setting process with input from numerous governments rather than being a top-down arrangement driven by the UN secretariat. Finally, the goals allow much flexibility on the part of individual states to prioritize which goals they pursue and how. The Paris Agreement, finalized a few months after the formal adoption of the SDGs, follows a similar model in hopes of facilitating action that is appropriate for particular contexts (Falkner 2016).

In practical terms measuring progress is key to successful implementation. This in turn requires agreement on how to collect and interpret statistical information. Inevitably it will also require new forms of research and investigations about how local performance of the goals has global consequences. Which indicators matter most and where is not a simple matter; nor is it a simple matter to co-ordinate implementation across goals or across multiple stakeholders, including civil society organizations, corporations, and governments. Given the number of goals and the scope of their ambition, implementation is bound to pose a series of major challenges. Goal 17 is explicitly designed to build the institutional partnerships needed to facilitate implementation such as the Sustainable Development Solutions Network with offices in Paris, New Delhi, and New York, which aims to mobilize expertise from the policy and scholarly networks to provide guides, policy briefs, and research materials to support SDG implementation.

Economic growth that increases wealth, but at the long-term cost of environmental destruction, eventually undercuts the gains, especially for very poor people in vulnerable locations. Thus, integrated planning of economy, society, and environment together constitutes the gold standard for the SDGs, but how to transcend the traditional policy silos poses a key question for all stakeholders.

Clearly co-ordination is important but innovation in terms of what kinds of knowledge are produced, by whom, and in what formats will be necessary. The challenge of SDG implementation includes work in the academy too, which will require inter-disciplinary research to think about cross-cutting issues between the goals.

The High Level Political Forum has a central role in overseeing the follow-up but:

the High Level Political Forum is ... based on voluntary country-level reviews without any universal mechanism to assess each country's contribution to the global realisation of these goals, nor to review and monitor multilateral agencies, the Bretton Woods institutions and any corporation or "partnership" wanting to use the UN name, logo or flag.

(Esquivel 2016, 13)

The dangers of the SDGs being used by numerous agencies and institutions to further their own interests cannot be ruled out nor is it clear that the High Level Political Forum will be effective in policing national oversight of this problem. A different option, built along the lines of the Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review mechanism, might have been chosen (Razavi 2016, 38–39). Such an option would have entailed a more robust peer-review process and could have included shadow reports from civil society.

Nonetheless, reporting on the SDGs is happening and while much of it depends on national statistical systems devised for other purposes, there are efforts being made to supplement these. The Sustainable Development Support Network, with technical support from the German development and education foundation Bertelsmann Stiftung, has been compiling a series of national measures in "dashboards" that monitor progress each year (Sachs *et al.* 2018). These comprehensive reports include national figures, and "league tables" of which state is performing best according to key indicators. The initial dashboard indicators focus on the G-20 countries, understood to be the large key states whose implementation of the goals will be key to their overall success.

As of 2018 no state was on track to meet all the goals. Hence implementation is sluggish, at least so far, given the lack of leadership by the major states. Scandinavian states are furthest along in implementation but even here the "dashboard" analysis suggests that work on Goal 12 on sustainable consumption and 13 on climate change still need attention. Developed countries seem to be paying little attention to the world's oceans, the source of essential protein for people in many places in the world, and they have done little to deal with biodiversity issues on land (Goal 15). Disaggregated data suggest that inequality in many of the G20 countries means that despite high average figures on economic performance not everyone in these states benefit. Conflict areas not surprisingly are having great difficulty with many goals, not least 1 (poverty) and 2 (hunger).

Given the sheer number of targets, contradictions between the goals are likely. While energy is clearly needed as part of many development programs,

if it is supplied by coal power-generating stations, then climate change will be exacerbated. If limited resources in the least developed states are focused on only a couple of goals, it is likely that others will be neglected. International donors who prioritize particular issues may skew the allocation of funds and expertise in ways that are not necessarily in line with national priorities. Moreover, there is no necessary connection between priorities in national capitals and those of rural peripheries. In rural areas, women's equality may be blocked by patriarchal systems of land holding. These obstacles may, in turn, stymie attempts to improve nutrition. Hence the emphasis in the SDG implementation documents on dialogue among stakeholders and the provision of expert advice on moving the agenda ahead. If business as usual is no longer acceptable, given the environmental problems that it generates, then innovations in social life and administrative practices by government are unavoidable.

Promoting social change and removing obstacles to implementation of the SDGs thus cannot avoid the practicalities of high politics. Rose Taylor and Mahon (Chapter 4) talk about the SDGs as a space of contestation that is less than ideal but has potential to initiate changes at various scales. From the small scale of local communities through national governments and at the largest scales of geopolitical rivalries, effective implementation requires that actors accept the need for the goals and are willing to actively work towards their implementation. The unanimity of the adoption of these wide-ranging targets is noteworthy, and as such opens up the space for contestation. However, inequality, environmental destruction, and widespread poverty remain stubborn problems, even if some substantial progress, such as the reduction of childhood mortality, was accomplished by the MDGs. Resistance to social change is widespread, and the globalization backlash expressed by right wing populist movements makes implementation all the more difficult, because of direct policy opposition to global initiatives as well as the lack of financial support.

Many of the aspirations of the SDGs require international co-operation and leadership from the major powers to provide funds and co-ordination. Donald Trump's election as American president has produced an administration much more concerned with national priorities and the reduction of government activity, the deregulation of industries and abandonment of international arrangements, both formal and informal, not to mention the gutting of numerous initiatives to protect health and the environment. While in the long run the Trump administration may not derail global governance, it can certainly curtail the implementation of the SDGs, and given the urgency of tackling climate change, the delay in acting on the Paris Agreement makes everything more difficult. Crucially, as Selby (2018) argues, the preoccupation within the Trump administration about competition with China and fears of declining hegemony identifies great power rivalry, not climate change, as the most important matter of politics.

Part of the SDGs' appeal is precisely the development of a common agenda and hence a process that ought to reduce at least some of those rivalries. How well the SDGs are implemented in the coming decade will depend in part on

how well they work to deliver on the initial promise of the United Nations for a peaceful and secure planet. Certainly, the Trump administration's focus on "America first" downplays the necessity of acting collectively to deal with common problems. The global agenda sketched out in the SDGs gets short shrift from an administration that insists that the context for policy is one of competing national states not a planet facing the need to simultaneously deal with poverty, illness, and inequalities across numerous societies. Despite China's rising influence, it is far from clear that its Belt and Road initiative in particular operates as a global leadership effort on the SDGs or anything else, rather than as a means for expanding its trading arrangements and political influence. If the Earth is one, the world still is not. Multipolarity and regional rivalries remain a major obstacle to the goals' implementation.

The SDGs and governance: coverage of this volume

The individual chapters in this book offer diverse perspectives on the global governance challenges to achieving the SDG. Given the interrelated nature of the SDGs, most of the chapters, even if primarily focused on a particular SDG, speak to several others. Five of the seven chapters in the first half of the book focus on a specific SDG – SDG 1 on food; SDG 2 on health, SDG 5 on gender, SDG 11 on cities, and SDG 13 on climate action. The other two chapters in this section reflect on a "notable silence" in the SDGs, namely migration. The second group of seven chapters analyses the SDGs as a group. Six of these examine either SDG 16 (Peace and Institutions) or SDG 17 (Partnerships), and challenges to the overall achievement of the SDGs. Chapter 11 rejects the SDG's claim to promoting sustainability and offers an alternative set of goals. Regrettably, given the scale of issues involved, it was not possible to cover all the SDGs. Five of the SDGs (SDG 4 on education, SDG 6 on water and sanitation, SDG 11 on industry, SDG 13 on life in water, and SDG 14 life on land) receive scant attention. Two of the arguably most important – poverty (SDG 1) and inequality (SDG 10) – are not covered by individual chapters but are a thread that runs throughout the whole volume.

The chapters come from varying theoretical perspectives and disciplinary backgrounds, with a fairly even split between a critical social science or political economy approach (Blay-Palmer and Young, KC and Hennebry, Ajibade and Egge, Dalby, Freston, Hosseini); and a more pragmatic or technocratic focus (Whiteside, Crush, Horton, Weber, Schweizer, Harrington). Coming from a feminist standpoint shared with Young and Blay-Palmer and KC and Hennebry, Rose Taylor, and Mahon offer a somewhat hybrid approach, which discusses the value of working within the structures of the SDGs while stressing the importance of contestation throughout their implementation. Quilley and Kish fairly comprehensively reject the vision of the SDGs and visualize a very different (a high-tech traditionalist, communitarian) society.

Although all authors agree that the SDGs agenda needs to be a transformative one, not all agree on the necessary scale of this transformation.

Blay-Palmer and Young (Chapter 2) see a radical shift in agriculture as required, advocating an agroecology approach that incorporates traditional knowledge and emphasizes women's role, and the role of community. Their view can perhaps be encapsulated by their comment that "it is important not to subsume agro-ecology into the industrial food system but for it to activate transformative change as a social movement" (p. 31).

KC and Hennebry (Chapter 5, pp. 71–85: one of two chapters on migration) argue that ultimately "(t)he SDGs do not address the more structural and pervasive nature of gender discrimination and structural violence that is deeply embedded in the existing governance paradigm" and that more profound changes are required. They use a case study of Nepal, one of the countries with the highest share of national income coming from remittances, to highlight the implications for the welfare of women migrants of ambivalent national policy in the sending country combined with disregard in the receiving countries.

Noting that SDG 13 (climate) is the only goal whose agenda is specified as "urgent", Dalby (Chapter 8, pp. 117–131) argues that a game-changing agenda is required: "in the current circumstances of the Anthropocene, developing sustainability requires a drastic cut in the use of combustion in the affluent metropolises of the global economy". Desperate times call for desperate measures. Dalby (Chapter 8, p. 126) argues that national governments will not be able to take actions on the required scale, and that international action is required: "the SDGs 13 on climate and 16 on Justice and Institution Building suggest the need to think through responses to climate change in more dramatic ways than much of the conventional discussion has so far considered".

Hosseini (Chapter 12) bases his argument for life-altering change on the ethical underpinnings of the development project and the SDGs. He argues that "(c)urrent global development thinking follows the same economic growth-based version with its dominant individualist neoliberalism, overconsumption, and depoliticization of development" (p. 202), and that "(t)o transform the world to a safe, free, and environmentally sustainable one, there is a need for ethical revision of global development" (p. 202) although he does reaffirm the importance of achieving the SDGs. Yet numerous development projects have failed to deliver what they promised, and so more drastic rethinking is clearly needed if a future for all people is to be based on ethical principles that look to more than economic criteria and the assumption that growth is the answer to human ills.

Ajibade and Egge (Chapter 7) focus on three major Asian cities to emphasize the importance of tackling both issues of inequality (Goal 10) and the vulnerabilities of the poor in rapidly urbanizing societies (Goal 11). Adapting these cities to be more resilient in the face of rising sea levels and increasingly severe storm events requires tackling infrastructure, but it will be all the more effective if the social circumstances of the poor, especially those living in informal settlements, are part of adaptation planning. The record so far in Jakarta, Bangkok, and Manila suggests that much more needs to be done to make cities safe and resilient in the face of climate-related hazards and to make urban life sustainable in the long term.

Freston (Chapter 10) examines the role of religion in development, which is particularly relevant to the SDG Goals 16 on peace and 17 on partnerships. He discusses “engaging religion only where it seemed instrumental to achieving the ends pre-determined by non-religious actors” (p. 154). He argues that in addition to religious organizations’ role as service provider and an influential partner for development, is also important in contributing ideas, values, and ultimately a sense of identity. He calls attention to the fundamental critiques of the ethical underpinnings of the SDGs by religious leaders, in particular the views of the Catholic Church as expressed in *Laudato Si’*.

Rose Taylor and Mahon (Chapter 4) focus on the comprehensive nature of the work required to incorporate gender considerations, not only in the gender goal itself (SDG 5) but mainstreamed throughout all the other goals. They argue that many contested areas require attention, ranging from sexual and reproductive rights, gender-based violence and rights of persons who identify as LGBTQ or as living with disability, as well as the more conventional gender dimensions of issues of work, pay, and property rights. A key focus in their analysis is the “spaces for contestation” in the SDG process. Rather than rejecting the (often-limited) indicators of progress thus far selected, they advocate working to broaden the indicators commensurate with the transformation required by gender mainstreaming.

The other seven chapters acknowledge the transformative nature of the agenda but focus more on how existing governance structures can be tweaked to support the SDGs. Crush’s (Chapter 6) analysis of the history of the treatment of migration (a “missing” SDG) in the international agenda explains why the issue did not feature as an SDG and quoting Peter Sutherland, the UN Special Representative of the UN Secretary General on International Migration until 2017, argues that “(a)lthough Sutherland labelled the presence of migration-related issues in a handful of SDG targets a ‘triumph’, it was a hollow victory” (Chapter 6, p. 106). Crush does however hold out hope that migration may become more integrated into the development project with the elevation of the International Organization for Migration to the status of a UN agency in 2016, despite the often different (indeed opposing) interests of migrant-sending and migrant-receiving countries.

Whiteside’s main focus (Chapter 3) is on how health became de-emphasized in the SDGs compared to its pre-eminent position in the MDGs, and the reasons for this change. He argues that the state of the HIV/AIDS epidemic played a key role. Although most of the health care system is financed domestically in most countries, he notes some global issues with implications for health governance. Three such issues are infectious disease pandemics which do not respect national borders, health of international migrants and refugees, and the impacts of climate change on health. He discusses some of the governance issues, including the fact that the key technical agency (the World Health Organization) is starved of funds, and the lack of any enforceable international framework for the right to health.

Both Horton (Chapter 13) and Weber (Chapter 14) take up the issue of funding for the SDG agenda (particularly relevant for SDG 17 on partnerships).

They discuss this from the perspective of how the necessary funds can be raised, rather than looking at governance challenges in the international financial architecture – a big topic all in itself. Horton examines how innovative sources of private finance can be mobilized for the SDGs to help to bridge the gap from “Billions to Trillions”, discussing the roles of private philanthropy, blended finance, and impact investment. These have the potential of bringing in additional billions (although probably not trillions) to finance the SDGs. It seems likely that it will be hard to raise the optimistically envisaged global public funds for climate (a topic which neither Horton nor Weber discuss). The advanced countries pledged in 2015 to raise \$100bn per year annually by 2020, with a major share of this to be channelled through the Green Climate Fund (Green Climate Fund 2018). However, up to May 2018, only \$10.3bn had been pledged, and that includes \$2bn from the US which seems unlikely to be delivered by the current administration.

Weber focuses on the only other logical place where the required volume of funds could be obtained, namely the financial industry. There are at least three different ways that banks can support the SDGs. Impact investment, where the investor is interested in a “triple bottom line” of returns (financial, social, and environmental) has the tightest link to social and environmental goals but is currently a niche product. Socially responsible investment is investment which seeks to “do no harm” and avoids financing social and environmental “bads” such as firms which flout labour laws, or the production and consumption of fossil fuels. Socially responsible investment is currently bigger than impact investment, but adopts a more passive stance vis-à-vis the SDGs, i.e. avoiding investments which harm the SDGs without specifically rewarding those which benefit them. Finally, sustainable banking takes a more proactive stance in promoting investments which help achieve the SDGs. Weber argues that although sustainable banking is not as yet large, it is growing, and he discusses the internationally developed principles and guidelines under which this can occur.

Schweizer (Chapter 9) looks at the big picture regarding potential trade-offs and synergies among the “big” goals of development, which are often categorized as economic, social, and environmental. She examines the implications of a set of modelled Shared Socio-economic Pathways (SSPs) for achievement of the SDGs, along with the associated implications for policies and institutions (i.e. international governance). Of the five SSPs modelled, she shows that the “Sustainability” pathway is the best in terms of achieving all the SDGs, whereas continuing “Historical Trends” will lead to partial achievement, while the least success occurs in the worst-case scenario (“Regional Rivalry”, where national security concerns override trends towards globalization and development). There are also two second-best worlds. In “Inequality”, wealthier countries and communities use technology to achieve most of the SDGs including clean energy but leave behind the poorest communities within and across countries. In “Fossil-fuelled Development”, the future is mortgaged to achieve the SDGs by 2030 by increasing reliance on fossil fuels, but where after 2030 a drastic