

## THE POLITICAL IMPACT OF THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Written by an international team of sixty-one experts and drawing on more than 3,000 scientific studies, this is the first comprehensive global assessment of the political impact of the Sustainable Development Goals, which were launched by the United Nations in 2015. It explores in detail the political steering effects of the Sustainable Development Goals on the UN system and the policies of countries in the Global North and Global South, on institutional integration and policy coherence, and on the ecological integrity and inclusiveness of sustainability policies worldwide. This book is a key resource for scholars, policymakers and activists concerned with the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, and those working in political science, international relations and environmental studies more broadly. It is one of a series of publications associated with the Earth System Governance Project. For more publications, see [www.cambridge.org/earth-system-governance](http://www.cambridge.org/earth-system-governance).

FRANK BIERMANN is a research professor of Global Sustainability Governance with the Copernicus Institute of Sustainable Development at Utrecht University and a widely cited scholar of global institutions and organizations in the sustainability domain. He pioneered the 'earth system governance' paradigm in global change research in 2005, and was founder and first chair of the Earth System Governance Project, a global transdisciplinary research network of sustainability scholars. He has authored or co-edited 18 books and published more than 200 articles and book chapters, along with more than 100 policy contributions.

THOMAS HICKMANN is an associate senior lecturer in the Department of Political Science at Lund University. His research focuses on the question of how societies can best deal with transboundary issues and provide global common goods in the sustainability domain from local to global levels. He is co-convenor of the taskforce on the Sustainable Development Goals of the Earth System Governance Project and served from 2015 to 2021 on the steering committee of the Environmental Politics/Global Change working group of the German Political Science Association.

CAROLE-ANNE SÉNIT is an assistant professor of Inclusive Sustainability Governance at the Copernicus Institute of Sustainable Development at Utrecht University. Her research explores the integration of the Global South in global change science, global civil society and global institutions. She is a research fellow of the Earth System Governance Project, co-convenor of the project's taskforce on the Sustainable Development Goals and managing editor of the *Earth System Governance* journal.

“This is a critical assessment of the political change required to deliver the universally agreed UN Sustainable Development Goals. I strongly advise everyone in political office to read this book. We are already two years into the decisive decade for humanity’s future on Earth, when we need to reach the safe and just landing zone defined by the SDGs. This agenda integrates people and planet, and requires transformative thinking and doing. Also in politics.”

*Johan Rockström, Director, Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research*

“This is a much needed book published at the mid-point to achieve the SDGs. We have been waiting for a book like this – an evidence-based and holistic assessment of the progress towards the SDGs from a global governance perspective. All stakeholders should learn from the authors on how we can achieve the SDGs.”

*Norichika Kanie, Professor, Graduate School of Media and Governance,  
Keio University*

“Knowing whether and how universal goal setting as exemplified by the UN’s SDGs is or isn’t creating transformative change towards global sustainability is important right now. An assessment of the question in 2030 will be interesting but too late. This study poses a timely and profound challenge to scholars and practitioners of global governance to identify what else, if anything, can and must be done in the time we have left to move societies towards positive action in securing the future we all agree we want.”

*Heide Hackmann, Inaugural Chief Executive Officer (2018 – 2022),  
International Science Council; Interim Director,  
Future Africa Institute, University of Pretoria*

“This comprehensive and rigorous assessment is essential reading for anyone seeking to ensure that the Decade of Action means something more than words. Agreeing on the SDGs was a major achievement of the international community in 2015 and the significance of this common vision only grows in turbulent times. To make the goals and principles have a real steering effect on the decisions societies make, it is now imperative to learn from the shortcomings identified in this study and find new ways to accelerate action. I hope this assessment sparks new ideas and new determination.”

*Åsa Persson, Research Director, Stockholm Environment Institute*

“Biermann, Hickmann and Sénit have led an extraordinary effort to take stock of all that we know and don’t know about the impact of the SDGs to date, this is a unique resource for researchers, practitioners and policy makers. It is particularly valuable coming at mid-point in implementation, with enough time left for course correction.”

*Sakiko Fukuda-Parr, Professor of International Affairs, The New School*



The **Earth System Governance Project** was established in 2009 as a core project of the International Human Dimensions Programme on Global Environmental Change. Since then, the Project has evolved into the largest social science research network in the area of sustainability and governance. The Earth System Governance Project explores political solutions and novel, more effective governance mechanisms to cope with the current transitions in the socio-ecological systems of our planet. The normative context of this research is sustainable development; earth system governance is not only a question of institutional effectiveness, but also of political legitimacy and social justice.

The **Earth System Governance series** with Cambridge University Press publishes the main research findings and synthesis volumes from the Project's first ten years of operation.

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# THE POLITICAL IMPACT OF THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Transforming Governance through Global Goals?

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