

CALL FOR CHAPTER PROPOSALS/ABSTRACTS

ELGAR COMPANION TO YOUNG PEOPLE AND THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

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The Challenge: Young People, Sustainable Futures and the Convergence of the 4th Industrial Revolution and the 6th Mass Extinction

In 2015 the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) endorsed a series of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) under the banner of a resolution titled Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Paragraph 14 of the Agenda outlines the scale and scope of the issues that the UN member states agreed that the planet and its systems and organisms face:

Our world today

14. We are meeting at a time of immense challenges to sustainable development. Billions of our citizens continue to live in poverty and are denied a life of dignity...There are enormous disparities of opportunity, wealth and power. Gender inequality remains a key challenge. Unemployment, particularly youth unemployment, is a major concern. Global health threats, more frequent and intense natural disasters, spiralling conflict, violent extremism, terrorism and related humanitarian crises and forced displacement of people threaten to reverse much of the development progress made in recent decades...The survival of many societies, and of the biological support systems of the planet, is at risk. (UNGA, 2015: 5)²

Prominent posthuman philosopher Rosi Braidotti (2019) has a different trajectory for approaching the multiple crises that the UNGA gestures towards. For Braidotti (2019)³

we are currently situated in a posthuman convergence between the Fourth industrial Age and the Sixth Extinction, between an advanced knowledge economy, which perpetuates patterns of discrimination and exclusion, and the threat of climate change devastation for both human and non-human entities.

The UNGA and Braidotti outlined these different senses of the crises that the bio-sphere faces in a pre-COVID-19 world. Early in 2020, as the SARS-CoV-2 virus and the pandemic that has resulted from the global spread of the virus, emerged and produced multiple public health, economic, social, cultural, and political crises, Josef Settele and his colleagues (2020), in a guest article for the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), argued that:

There is a single species that is responsible for the COVID-19 pandemic - us. As with the climate and biodiversity crises, recent pandemics are a direct consequence of human activity – particularly our global financial and economic systems, based on a limited paradigm that prizes economic growth at any cost. We have a small window of opportunity, in overcoming the challenges of the current crisis, to avoid sowing the seeds of future ones.⁴

Importantly, in the context of the crises of earth systems, and the ways in which our pasts and presents are exploiting and using up our futures, young people's futures, before they arrive, a generational perspective should provoke an ethic of care to the possibilities of futures and generations. An ethic of care that is suggested by the concept of sustainable development. Jeffrey Sachs (2015) is a Nobel Prize winning economist, and one of the chief architects of the United Nations sustainable development agenda.⁵ In an Introduction to the historical development of the concept of sustainable development, Sachs (2015, p.5) traces the ways in which early definitions of sustainable development embraced, initially, the concept of intergenerational responsibilities, but, later, dropped this concept for a more 'practical' definition:

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² United Nations General Assembly. 2015. Transforming Our World: The 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld/publication>

³ Braidotti, R. 2019. Posthuman Knowledge. <https://www.gsd.harvard.edu/event/rosi-braidotti/>

⁴ Settele, J., Díaz, Brondizio, E. and Daszak, P. (2020) COVID-19 Stimulus Measures Must Save Lives, Protect Livelihoods, and Safeguard Nature to Reduce the Risk of Future Pandemics, April 27, <https://ipbes.net/covid19stimulus>

⁵ Sachs, J. 2015. The Age of Sustainable Development. New York: Columbia University Press.



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This 'intergenerational' concept of sustainable development was widely adopted, including at the Rio Earth Summit in 1992. One of the key principles of the Rio Declaration was that 'development today must not threaten the needs of present and future generations.'

Over time, however, the definition of sustainable development evolved into a more practical approach, focusing less on intergenerational needs and more on the holistic approach linking economic development, social inclusion, and environmental sustainability. (Sachs 2015, p.5)

Yet, even on the evidence of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, such an ethic of care continues to be thwarted by the very real probability that, for the logics of advanced capitalism 'sustainable development' is, indeed, an oxymoron: 'despite progress in a number of areas over the past four years, on some of the Goals, progress has been slow or even reversed. The most vulnerable people and countries continue to suffer the most and the global response has not been ambitious enough' (UNDESA 2019).⁶

The Opportunity: A Call for a Critical Engagement with the Possibilities of Sustainable Futures for Young People

The United Nation Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs) provide a framework of action to address global challenges such as poverty, inequality, prosperity, peace, and justice to build more sustainable futures. The SDGs list seventeen interconnected goals to be achieved by 2030. For youth activists, researchers and policy makers engaged with enabling young people to imagine, shape and advocate for a sustainable future, the SDGs are profoundly important, because they prompt us to shift attention from an individual young person's well-being, resilience and enterprise, to the 'ecologies' that can promote diversity, inclusion, social justice, diverse cultures of democracy, and sustainable futures.

This Elgar Companion is timely, in that it will draw together contemporary research on concerns which reference a number of the key challenges and aspirations embedded in the SDGs including:

Goal 3) Good health and well-being

Goal 4) Quality education

Goal 5) Gender equality

Goal 8) Decent work and economic growth

Goal 10) Reduced inequality

Goal 11) Sustainable cities and communities

Goal 16) Peace, justice and strong institutions

These SDG-related concerns are vital at a time when planetary systems (environmental, social, cultural, economic, political) are in crisis, and where the multiple dimensions of these crises are evidenced in a variety of ways, including:

- wide-spread precarious and under-employment;
- the rise of a 'gig-economy', and the disappearance of meaningful work with the rise of AI, and the emerging 'digital disruption';
- dis-engagement from education and training that appears to be increasingly (un)'fit-for-purpose';
- significant physical and mental health and well-being challenges for large sections of the human population – especially for children and young people - including those associated with the COVID-19 pandemic;
- the continuing profound disadvantage and marginalisation of indigenous populations and communities;
- the wretchedness of life as experienced by the hundreds of millions of refugees and asylum seekers on the move around the globe;
- the rise of nationalisms, fundamentalisms, Islamophobia, trans* phobia, homophobia and far-right populism in the 'liberal' democracies;
- continued in(effective) action by key actors (local, national, global) on the unfolding consequences of the Anthropocene.

⁶ UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA). 2019. SDG Progress Reports 2019: Are we on track to achieve the global goals? <https://www.un.org/development/desa/en/news/sustainable/sdg-progress-reports-2019.html>



The purpose of this Companion, then, is to provide not only a broad overview of research in relation to young people in the current context of planetary crisis but also a space for critical, innovative, imaginative, diverse and inclusive examinations of complex and often under-explored issues in relation to young people and sustainable futures. With this in mind, we are looking for contributions that engage with the following issues and themes that add complexity, detail and insight into the challenges and opportunities for young people and sustainable futures under the influence of the SDGs. The list is not exhaustive, the themes may intersect, and we will consider abstracts that engage with other themes:

- Young people's activism for sustainable futures (for example, the Fridays for Future/School Strikes For Climate movements)
- Young people, diversity (class, gender, sexualities, religious, abilities, neuro-diversity, geography) and sustainable futures;
- Young people and the challenges and opportunities for sustainable development/futures in postcolonial and Small Island development contexts;
- Young people, First Nations' knowledge and sustainable futures;
- Globalised neoliberal capitalism, young people's well-being, education, training (TVET) and employment pathways and sustainable futures;
- Place-based responses and young people's sustainable futures;
- Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) and UN SDG 4.7: By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development;
- Policy analyses of government, NGO, and business policy and program responses to, and responsibilities for, the challenges and opportunities for young people's sustainable futures;
- Innovative theoretical and methodological approaches (post-humanism, critical development studies, postcolonial theories, eco-socialism...) to the rise of Anthropocene and young people's sustainable futures;
- Young people, 'planetary health', and the reimagination and co-design of innovative approaches to equitable and inclusive health and wellbeing (physical, mental, social, spiritual, environmental) in the post-COVID 19 and decarbonising world out to 2050.

THE CALL

We are seeking 300-350 words proposals/abstracts for chapters in this Companion.

Abstracts should be submitted by May 30, 2022.

Accepted abstracts will be notified by the end of July 2022.

First drafts of chapters will be due on or before March 30, 2023.

Final drafts of chapters will be due on or before July 30, 2023.

The Companion will be published in 2024.

Final chapters will be 6000 words in length, including references.

The Companion will comprise approximately 35 chapters

Microsoft Word versions of chapter abstracts should be emailed to the editorial team at:

young.people.sustainable.futures@gmail.com



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