A Global Humanities Approach to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals
Understanding Planet, People, and Prosperity

Edited by Kelly Comfort

Introduction

A Global Humanities Approach to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)

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This introductory chapter first establishes the theoretical foundations of *A Global Humanities Approach to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals: Understanding Planet, People, and Prosperity* by outlining the origin, evolution, and current state of three fields: the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), and the Global Humanities. The Introduction then goes on to explain the methodological approach and organizational structure employed throughout the textbook. Next, it summarizes the 12 global humanities texts featured in Chapters 1–12 and includes details on the intersection of each text with the SDG framework. Finally, the opening chapter concludes with detailed guidelines for instructors on how to best use this textbook. Sections I, II, and III of this "Introduction" are intended for both instructors and students, while Section IV is written for teachers who plan to adopt this textbook as the primary material in a college-level course.

I   Theoretical Foundations

This textbook sits at the crossroads between three theoretical foundations—the UN SDGs, ESD, and the growing field of the Global Humanities; the origin and evolution of each field is outlined in this opening section.

1   The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals

In "The 17 Goals," the United Nations' Department of Economic and Social Affairs explains the decades-long history behind the emergence of the UN SDGs by outlining five major events leading up to the 2015 adoption of the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* and the 17 SDGs. First, in 1992 at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 178 countries adopted *Agenda 21*, which was "a comprehensive plan of action to build a global partnership for sustainable development to improve human lives and protect the environment" ("The 17 Goals"). The next milestone came in 2000 during the Millennium Summit in New York, when UN Member States adopted the Millennium Declaration that led to the creation of these eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs):

1 eradicate extreme poverty and hunger;
2 achieve universal primary education;
3 promote gender equality and empower women;
4 reduce child mortality;
5 improve maternal health;
6 combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases;

7 ensure environmental sustainability;

8 develop a global partnership for development

<div align="right">("We Can End Poverty")</div>

Then, in 2002, at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, South Africa, the "Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development and the Plan of Implementation" was adopted, which reaffirmed the commitment of the global community to not only poverty eradication, but so too the environment. In 2012, at the UN Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, the UN Member States adopted *The Future We Want* document "to launch the process to develop a set of SDGs to build upon the MDGs and to establish the UN High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development" ("The 17 Goals"). The following year, the UN General Assembly created an Open Working Group with 30 members to develop a proposal for the SDGs ("The 17 Goals").

Following these initial steps, in January 2015 the UN General Assembly began to negotiate the post-2015 development agenda, which "culminated in the subsequent adoption of the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*" at the UN Sustainable Development Summit in New York in September 2015 ("The 17 Goals"). This is when all UN Member States adopted the following 17 SDGs (Figure 0.1) together with 169 targets and 231 indicators to monitor progress.

These goals, which serve as "an urgent call for action by all countries—developed and developing—in a global partnership," are the basis for "a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future" ("The 17 Goals"). UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon calls the SDGs "our shared vision of humanity and a social contract between the world's leaders and the people" ("We Can End Poverty"). He also designates them "a to-do list for the people and planet" ("We Can End Poverty").

Figure 0.1 The United Nations sustainable development goals, https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/. Reprinted with permission. The content of this publication has not been approved by the United Nations and does not reflect the views of the United Nations or its officials or Member States.

According to *Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, the SDGs and their targets would come into effect on January 1, 2016 and "guide the decisions we take over the next fifteen years." During this period, the annual High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development would serve as the central UN platform for "the follow-up and review of the SDGs," while the Division for Sustainable Development Goals (DSDGs) in the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) would provide "substantive support and capacity-building for the SDGs and their related thematic issues" and play a key role in "the evaluation of UN systemwide implementation" and also "on advocacy and outreach activities relating to the SDGs" ("The 17 Goals"). Finally, the UN Secretary General publishes an annual SDG Progress Report in cooperation with the UN System that is based on "the global indicator framework and data produced by national statistical systems and information collected at the regional level" ("The 17 Goals").

When compared to the MDGs that they replaced, the UN SDGs are "wider in scale and in ambition" and are also more "universal—covering every country in the world—and no longer applicable only to developing countries" ("What Are the Sustainable Development Goals?"). In a 2015 Briefing Sheet published by the ICLEI Local Governments for Sustainability titled "From MDGs to SDGs: What Are the Sustainable Development Goals?" Michael Woodbridge outlines what makes the SDGs different from the MDGs. He notes three key distinctions. First, the SDGs "are uniformly applicable to all countries of the world," a change that removes "the 'developing' versus 'developed' dichotomy that left the MDGs open to criticism" (Woodbridge 2). Second, the SDGs have "significantly expanded on the scale and content of the MDGs" (Woodbridge 2). The overall expansion of content stems from the fact that the SDGs are focused on "a global development with-and-for sustainability" insofar as they "demonstrate the understanding that the environment is not an add-on or in opposition to sustainable development, but rather the base that underpins all other goals" (Woodbridge 2). The overall expansion of scope has to do with the notion that the SDGs differ from the MDGs' "narrow focus on poverty reduction" by including "new themes which reflect an approach that sees the environment, economy, and society as embedded systems rather than separate competing 'pillars'" (Woodbridge 2). Third, whereas with the MDGs "countries of the Global South" had "collectively played a minimum role in their design" to the extent that the MDGs were criticized as having been "imposed on the developing countries by the more developed," the SDGs have been created through "an unparalleled participatory process" that has allowed developing countries "to provide significant input into the content" and has also included local and subnational governments as well as civil society and the private sector as "prominent actors" in the design and implementation process (Woodbridge 2).

The SDG framework thus merges "economic, social or environmental aspects of development questions" to "put inequality at the heart of the agenda," which is evidenced by the "guiding principle that global development should 'leave no-one behind'" ("What Are the Sustainable Development Goals?"). In short, the adoption of the UN SDGs recognizes "that ending poverty and other deprivations must go hand-in-hand with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth—all while tackling climate change and working to preserve our oceans and forests" ("The 17 Goals"). Moreover, the UN SDGs are deemed "global in nature and universally applicable," while at the same time "taking into account different national realities, capacities and levels of development" and "respecting national policies and priorities" (*Transforming Our World*). In this way, the SDG framework rests on a firm acknowledgment of the importance of "the natural and cultural diversity of the world" as well as the need for "inter-cultural understanding, tolerance, mutual respect and an ethic of

global citizenship and shared responsibility" (*Transforming Our World*). *A Global Humanities Approach to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals: Understanding Planet, People, and Prosperity* reinforces this emphasis on place-based, locally rooted, and culturally anchored approaches to sustainability challenges, while also calling for a global vision in the implementation of the SDGs that is inclusive of all cultures and civilizations.

2   *Education for Sustainable Development*

Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) was officially introduced on an international scale in 1992 with the publication of Chapter 36 ("Promoting Education, Public Awareness and Training") of *Agenda 21*, the official document of the 1992 Earth Summit. The table below outlines the three ESD program areas and related objectives set forth in *Agenda 21*:

Program Area	Objectives
a Reorienting education toward sustainable development	"Education is critical for promoting sustainable development and improving the capacity of the people to address environment and development issues" and should "promote integration of environment and development concepts."
b Increasing public awareness	"There is a need to increase public sensitivity to environment and development problems and involvement in their solutions and foster a sense of personal environmental responsibility and greater motivation and commitment towards sustainable development."
c Promoting training	"Training is one of the most important tools to develop human resources and facilitate the transition to a more sustainable world. It should have a job-specific focus, aimed at filling the gaps in knowledge and skill that would help individuals find employment and be involved in environmental and development work."

The next major step in solidifying ESD came in 2005, when the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) launched *The United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development* (DESD). Spanning the period 2005–2014, DESD aimed to "reorient education towards sustainability," "integrate the principles, values and practices of sustainable development into all aspects of education and learning," and "mobilize the educational resources of the world to help create a more sustainable future" ("UN Decade of ESD"). More specifically, DESD promoted educational efforts that "encouraged changes in behaviour that created a more sustainable future in terms of environmental integrity, economic viability and a just society for present and future generations" ("UN Decade of ESD"). This integration of environmental, economic, and social factors was a key step in shaping the future of ESD. The overarching belief underpinning DESD can be summed up as follows: "Education alone cannot achieve a more sustainable future; however, without education and learning for sustainable development, we will not be able to reach that goal" ("UN Decade of ESD"). This additional emphasis on the key role of education in shaping the values that support sustainable development and sustainable societies marks a key moment in the genealogy of ESD.

In 2012, the importance of ESD was reiterated in the section on "Education" of *The Future We Want*. This section includes seven numbered paragraphs; the main points of each paragraph are outlined in the table below:

Paragraph	Summary of main points
229	• Reaffirm commitments "to the right to education," including "universal access to primary education," "full access to quality education at all levels," and "equal access to education." • Underscore that education is "an essential condition for achieving sustainable development."
230	• Recognize that "the younger generations are the custodians of the future" and highlight the "need for better quality and access to education beyond the primary level." • Resolve to "improve the capacity of our education systems to prepare people to pursue sustainable development." • Promote "enhanced cooperation among schools, communities and authorities in efforts to promote access to quality education at all levels."
231	• Promote "Sustainable Development awareness among youth" in accordance with the DESD goals.
232	• Emphasize "the importance of greater international cooperation to improve access to education" through increased education infrastructure, investment, and partnerships.
233	• Promote ESD and integrate sustainable development more actively into education beyond the 2005–2014 DESD period.
234	• Encourage "educational institutions to consider adopting good practises in sustainability management on their campuses and in their communities."
235	• Support "educational institutions" to carry out "research and innovation for sustainable development" (The Future We Want).

At UNESCO's "Global Education for All Meeting" in 2014, the publication of what is known as "The Muscat Agreement" placed education "at the top of the global development agenda for the period 2015–2030" (Zhang and Wang 479). In the section titled "Vision, Principles and Scope of the Post-2015 Education Agenda," "The Muscat Agreement" insists that education "is a fundamental human right for every person" and "an essential condition for human fulfilment, peace, sustainable development, economic growth, decent work, gender equality, and responsible global citizenship" that contributes to "the reduction of inequalities and the eradication of poverty." This agreement argues that "education must be placed at the heart of the global development agenda" and that "the post-2015 educational agenda" should "be an integral part of the broader international development framework" ("The Muscat Agreement").

Also in 2014, UNESCO launched its "Global Action Programme on ESD" (GAP) at the World Conference on ESD in Japan. The stated objective of the GAP is "generating and scaling up ESD action at all levels and in all areas of education, and in all sustainable development sectors" ("The Global Action Programme"). The GAP reaffirms ESD "as a vital means of implementation for sustainable development" in areas including climate change, biodiversity, disaster risk reduction, sustainable consumption and production, and children's rights ("The Global Action Programme"). The GAP insists that ESD is both "an opportunity and a responsibility" that "should engage both developed and developing countries" and "fully take into consideration local, national, regional, and global contexts, as well as the contribution of culture to sustainable development" ("The Global Action Programme"). This new appreciation for "cultural diversity" as well as "local and traditional knowledge and indigenous wisdom and practices" is a noteworthy addition to ESD's ongoing interest in "universal principals such as human rights, gender equality, democracy, and social justice" ("The Global Action Programme"). This

textbook's approach is similar insofar as it underscores the importance of deep cultural knowledge to both the global humanities and the UN SDGs.

With the adoption of the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* in September 2015, SDG 4 on Quality Education underscored the importance of education in general and ESD in particular for achieving a sustainable world. Target 4.7 on "Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship" relates directly to ESD with the following objective:

> 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. ("The Global Goals: 4")

Target 4.7, in mentioning education for both "sustainable development" and "global citizenship," adds a new layer to ESD. The aim of Global Citizen Education (GCED), according to the UN, is "nurturing respect for all, building a sense of belonging to a common humanity and helping learners become responsible and active global citizens" ("Global Citizen Education"). GCED strives to help "young people develop the core competencies which allow them to actively engage with the world, and help to make it a more just and sustainable place" ("Global Citizen Education"). Education for global citizenship is thus a form of "civic learning" that involves "students' active participation in projects that address global issues of a social, political, economic, or environmental nature" ("Global Citizen Education"). It is important to recognize the connection between ESD and GCED insofar as

> both prioritize the relevance and content of education in order ensure that education helps build a peaceful and sustainable world and both emphasize the need to foster knowledge, skills, values, attitudes and behaviours that allow individuals to take informed decisions and assume active roles locally, nationally, and globally. ("Global Citizen Education")

This textbook aims to promote both ESD and GCED at colleges and universities across the world. It is part of a growing effort in higher education to prepare and engage students to enact sustainable development, which requires education "for" sustainable development, and not just "about" sustainable development. This textbook strives to reinforce the message of Target 4.7 by promoting an "appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development" ("The Global Goals: 4").

Finally, the "ESD for 2030 Roadmap" identifies five priority action areas aimed at increasing the contributions of education "to building a more just and sustainable world": (1) "advancing policy"; (2) "transforming learning environments"; (3) "building capacities of educators"; (4) "empowering and mobilizing youth"; and (5) "accelerating local level actions" ("Education for Sustainable Development for 2030 Toolbox"). This book overlaps with action areas 2, 3, and 4. It transforms learning environments through its transdisciplinary approach to both the UN SDGs and the global humanities. It builds the capacities of educators by providing all of the tools needed (contextualization and background information; discussion questions and assignments; and final projects and presentations) for instructors to teach this important subject matter to their students. It empowers and mobilizes youth by introducing them to inspiring and provocative global humanities texts and guiding them through various practical applications and activities that connect the global to the local.

3   *The Global Humanities*

The remainder of this section traces the origin and evolution of the recent field of global humanities and notes the intersection of the global humanities with the UN SDGs and ESD. The global humanities as a discipline should be seen as stemming from two separate disciplines, namely, the humanities and global studies.[1] Let us begin with a brief history of the humanities. The origin of the humanities is often traced back to Ancient Greece, although in recent years there has been increased consideration and awareness of the ways in which the field emerged in other cultures and civilizations across the world as well as earlier in human history. Defined as a field of study that investigates "the expressions of the human mind," humanities disciplines have traditionally included: "archaeology, art history, history, linguistics, literature studies, musicology, philology, philosophy, and religious studies" (Amirell). Most disciplines in the humanities "were forged during the nineteenth century, when they were institutionalised under the influence of the German academic model formulated and promoted by, among others, Wilhelm von Humboldt" as standing in contrast to the more practical natural sciences. At this time in history, they became intimately linked to the concept of the nation-state and were "delimited by national borders, whether these were geographical, historical, cultural, or linguistic" (Amirell). The humanities, particularly the study of language, history, literature, and culture, frequently focused "on European or Western history and culture" with "the study of the rest of humanity often [. . .] relegated to a few specialised and relatively minor disciplines such as Oriental studies, religious studies, and certain sections of philology" (Amirell). This trend continued well into the 20th century, until the humanities, particularly in the period after 1945, became "more critical of the nation-states and of nationalism" (Amirell). By the end of the 20th century, as a result of the influence of globalization and increasing criticism against "Eurocentric, colonial, and other exclusionary biases in academia," this "national paradigm" was further challenged in more fundamental ways (Amirell). In the 2000s, the humanities experienced "a global turn" that aimed "to include all of humankind in the humanities," which marked an effort to "transcend Eurocentric and colonial worldviews" and to become "more globally inclusive, critical, and transdisciplinary" (Amirell). This is when it became possible to conceive of the global humanities.

Yet before global humanities emerged as a discipline, global studies, which can be traced back to the mid-1990s, became established as a field of study in its own right. Amirell outlines the "rapid rise and institutionalization" of global studies from around 1995 as well as the "spectacular expansion" of the field around 2010 with the emergence of "several journals dedicated to global studies, scholarly associations, regular conferences, numerous research centres, and schools of global studies around the world, as well as hundreds of study programs in global studies at all levels." Often defined as "a broad interdisciplinary field spanning many disciplines in the humanities and social sciences," global studies has been highly dominated by the social sciences and has had a narrower scope than that of the humanities (Amirell). "Despite the global turn in many humanities disciplines in recent years," Amirell explains, "history is the only major humanities discipline that has a prominent place in global studies," particularly when "historical scholarship" is narrowly focused on "the history of globalisation" rather than broadly conceived as "global history as a whole." Amirell documents two ways in which global studies marginalizes the humanities: first, through the "heavy bias toward the social sciences" in both education and research; second, through the "appropriation of the traditional fields of research of the humanities" by various social sciences disciplines that "have increasingly come to claim culture as 'their field.'" To overcome such marginalization, the global humanities has "the potential to flourish as a field of study separate from that of global studies," which "can be achieved by embracing global perspectives but not confining them to the study of modern globalisation" (Amirell).

The global humanities, Amirell explains further, is typically defined in one of three ways: (1) as a field that "enhance[s] international collaboration and mobility within the humanities"; (2) as a field marked by "the study of non-Western cultures and languages"; (3) as a field that "seems akin to global studies" but "has a slightly larger representation of humanities disciplines." Amirell advocates for the importance of the global humanities in terms of its ability to produce and promote "global, inclusive, and transdisciplinary frameworks of analysis," "globally useful knowledge," and "mutual understanding and communication across national, regional, cultural, and linguistic borders." He insists further that the "global humanities should aim to develop frameworks of analysis that can be used to study all cultural expressions of humankind and to foster intercultural dialogue and understanding" (Amirell). By taking on

> the study of cultural and historical processes without geographic or chronological limitations and unfettered from the bonds of Eurocentrism and methodological nationalism, which often are associated with the traditional humanities disciplines as they have developed in the West,

the global humanities as an emerging discipline should be seen, Amirell insists, as "one of the most promising attempts in recent years to break free from the discourse of crisis" in the humanities more generally. Other scholars of the global humanities agree. For example, Wiebke Denecke in her 2021 article "Comparative Global Humanities Now," proposes "to energize the mission of the humanities by radically globalizing their subject matter and methods, taking inspiration from the world's monumental archive of humanistic creativity over 5,000 years of recorded experience" (479). According to Denecke, the global humanities, which she calls the "Comparative Global Humanities," should aim "to be inclusively global in terms of subject matter and participants, conceptually comparative, and based on rigorous historical and philological research" (482). Michael Patrick Rutter and Steven Mintz, in their October 12, 2022 blog post "Internationalizing the Humanities" on *Inside Higher Ed*, ask the question: "Can the humanities' future be global and comparative?" They mention "a growing concern with internationalizing our conception of the humanities" and consider it "imperative" that the humanities become "truly inclusive" by taking on "more explicitly international and cross-cultural" subject matter (Rutter and Mintz). Rutter and Mintz mention the work of Denecke, who they see as aiming "to re-energize the humanities by internationalizing its subject matter and championing methods that involve systematic comparisons and contrasts." Calling Denecke's "vision" "extraordinarily exciting and inspiring," that also ask whether it is "realistic and realizable" given the "limits" of "language skills" and "historical knowledge." Rutter and Mintz thus point out some of the challenges to "globalizing the humanities." The greatest challenge they see is that most humanities scholars are "[t]rained in specific national and linguistic traditions" and therefore are not "prepared to offer truly global, comparative perspectives" that "require deep knowledge about specific contexts and language skills that most [. . .] lack." Another obstacle stems from the fact the comparatists must work hard "to avoid implicit assumptions about cultural hierarchies" such as "Eurocentric standards or assumptions," so as to instead "make comparisons and contrasts explicit" and account for "cultural difference" (Rutter and Mintz).

Much of the discussion of the global humanities by Amirell, Denecke, and Rutter and Mintz centers around the challenge of ensuring deep cultural, linguistic, and regional knowledge and expertise, on the one hand, and internationalizing the discipline to be more inclusive, open, and cross-cultural, on the other hand. Interestingly enough, similar discussions have taken place regarding the role of culture and of the arts and humanities in relation to the UN SDGs and ESD. While certainly not an exhaustive list, these four efforts to establish the importance of the humanities—broadly conceived—in advancing the global sustainable development goals are

worth noting: "The Hangzhou Declaration" (2013); The World Humanities Conference (2017); the British Council's "The Missing Pillar: Culture's Contribution to the UN Sustainable Development Goals" publication (2020); and the University College London's Institute of Advanced Studies' "The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): Contributions from the Humanities, A Research Report" (2021). Each of these efforts is briefly explained below.

"The Hangzhou Declaration: Placing Culture at the Heart of Sustainable Development Policies," a UNESCO publication adopted on May 17, 2013, locates "an urgent need for new approaches" to "mounting challenges" that "should fully acknowledge the role of culture as a system of values and a resource and framework to build truly sustainable development." This new cultural approach is grounded in "the recognition of culture as part of the global and local commons as well as a wellspring of creativity and renewal" ("The Hangzhou Declaration"). Reaffirming culture as "a fundamental enabler of" and "a driver for" sustainability, the "Hangzhou Declaration" calls for "a people-centred and place-based approach" to development and peace-building initiatives ("The Hangzhou Declaration"). By placing culture "at the heart of future policies for sustainable development," cultural studies experts from a variety of global humanities disciplines have the potential to play a key role in the advancement of the 17 global goals.

The World Humanities Conference, jointly organized by UNESCO and the International Council for Philosophy and Human Sciences (CIPSH) and held between August 6 and 11, 2017 in Liège, Belgium, aimed "to establish a new agenda for the humanities of the 21st century" and to "redefine the foundations, role and responsibilities of the humanities in contemporary society" ("A New Humanities Agenda"). Specifically, the conference sought to identify ways in which the competencies and specific approaches of the humanities—understood as including literature and language, philosophy, history, and the arts—could actively contribute to the *2030 Agenda*. According to John Crowley, Chief of Research, Policy and Foresight in the UNESCO Sector for Social and Human Science, the conference's main objective involved setting an "ambitions" new "global agenda" for the humanities (qtd. in McKenzie). In particular, "A New Humanities Agenda for the 21st Century: Outcome Document" celebrates the ability of the humanities to foster diversity and freedom of thought, to promote transparency, to engage in "epistemological decolonization," and to take "a critical approach" to the concept of universal values.

Another important contribution, the British Council's 2020 publication "The Missing Pillar: Culture's Contribution to the UN Sustainable Development Goals" outlines nine recommendations for "incorporating the SDGs into arts and culture programmes and measuring culture's contribution to the SDGs" (8). While seemingly similar in language to "The Hangzhou Declaration," "The Missing Pillar" differs insofar as it focuses on arts and culture as a sector and as a creative process. For example, its recommendations include: developing training programs that "highlight the role of arts and culture in the SDGs"; working with community partners "in developing, delivering and evaluating cultural initiatives"; and advocating "for specific outcomes that respond to individual SDGs through arts and culture" ("The Missing Pillar" 8). Noting that there is no specific SDG on culture in *Agenda 30*, "The Missing Pillar" initiative questions why "Culture," described as "the glue that binds humanity together," "is not formally recognized alongside the three pillars of development—social, economic and environmental" (Lewis). Overall, "The Missing Pillar" marks a pivotal moment in the thinking on how arts and culture—two key areas for the global humanities—can address global challenges and make the SDGs more accessible and impactful.

Finally, in 2021, University College London's Institute of Advanced Studies conducted a research project in conjunction with the consultancy firm SHM "to investigate the reasons" for

the perceived "gap between the potential and actual contribution of the Humanities" to ongoing work to promote and achieve the UN SDGs ("The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): Contributions from the Humanities"). The aims of this project were "to identify ways of applying Humanities insights to work on SDGS and to make proposals for policies to help ensure that the Humanities are fully integrated into the debates from now on" ("The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): Contributions from the Humanities"). The study's final publication, titled "The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): Contributions from the Humanities, A Research Report," laments that the UN Reports on the SDGs, which tend to "advocate technocratic, resource-management solutions," refer "to human behaviour only insofar as it impedes policy implementation" and pay "[l]ittle attention [. . .] to the human factors—social, political and ethical—essential to any prospect of lasting success in transforming what people can or will do." The report also complains that "policy-makers rarely draw upon the vast reservoir of cultural expertise that is the Humanities" ("The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): Contributions from the Humanities"). Hoping to rectify these shortcomings, the authors insist on the value that the humanities offer in terms of "a set of concepts, theories and methods for understanding human behaviour, individual and collective" ("The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): Contributions from the Humanities"). This project proposes many clear ways in which the humanities might contribute to improving the UN SDG framework—by offering "critical scrutiny" to any claims to "universal knowledge" or to any assumptions that knowledge can be transferred intact from one context or culture to another; by introducing "greater translatability" to the SDGs that allow for "the best, tailored solutions" for each country based on their specific cultural values and local realities; by critiquing "anthropocentric perspectives" that present humans as "unique and entitled to exploit the natural world"; by promoting "critical thinking" and "an evaluative approach" based on "a multiplicity of perspectives" that contextualizes knowledge and questions engrained assumptions and values as well as reductive ways of thinking; by being inclusive of "the diversity of epistemological approaches taken by the various stakeholders," including by Indigenous peoples ("The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): Contributions from the Humanities"). This textbook aims to further the work of University College London's Institute of Advanced Studies by offering a new contribution from the humanities to the UN SDGs.

II   Methodological Approach

This textbook—as the title suggests—takes a "global humanities approach" to the UN SDGs. This occurs in two distinct yet overlapping ways. First, the textbook presents 12 global humanities texts in Chapters 1–12: five documentary films (Aya Hanabusa's *Holy Island*, Kip Andersen and Keegan Kuhn's *Cowspiracy*, Agnès Varda's *The Gleaners and I*, Kief Davidson and Pedro Kos's *Bending the Arc*, and Wang Jiuliang's *Plastic China*), one feature film (Ivan Sanjinés, Nicolás Ipamo and Alejandro Noza's *Cry of the Forest*), two photographic collections (Barbara Dombrowski's *Tropic Ice: Dialog between Places Affected by Climate Change* and Fabrice Monteiro's *The Prophecy*), three novels (Fernando Contreras Castro's *Única Looking at the Sea*, Agustina Bazterrica's *Tender is the Flesh*, and Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger*), and one short story (Hao Jingfang's "Folding Beijing"). A global humanities text is here defined broadly as any creative work (regardless of length, genre, language of production, place of geographical origin, etc.) that conveys a set of meanings and is embedded in a particular culture and context. The photographers, authors, and directors examined are "practitioners" or "artists" of the global humanities. They hail from Argentina, Belgium, Benin, Bolivia, Brazil, Costa

Rica, China, France, Germany, India, Japan, and the United States, while their works take us to many of these homelands and to additional nations such as Australia, Ecuador, Greenland, Haiti, Kiribati, Mongolia, Peru, Rwanda, Senegal, and Tanzania. Overall, the chosen texts are humanistic creations that reflect on the relationship between humans and their local and global environments.

Second, the individual chapter authors are themselves scholars of the global humanities with a wide range of disciplinary expertise as outlined below:

Chapter author:	*Disciplinary specialization:*
Kelly Comfort Introduction, Chapter 3, Conclusion	Comparative Literature, Latin American Studies, Global Modernisms, Critical Theory, *Flânerie* Studies, Sustainability Studies
Amanda Weiss Chapter 1	East Asian Studies, Media Studies, Cultural Studies, Gender Studies
Britta Kallin Chapter 2	German and Austrian Literature and Culture, Gender Studies, Critical Race Studies, Postcolonial Studies, Sustainability Studies
Natalie Khazaal Chapter 4	Arabic Media and Language, Minority Disenfranchisement, Critical Animal and Media Studies
Miguel Rosas Buendía Chapter 5	Latin American Studies, History of Science, Environmental Humanities, Indigenous Studies
Stéphanie Boulard Chapter 6	French Literature, Visual Arts, Film and Media Studies, Word and Image Studies, Environmental Humanities
Mirla González Chapter 7	Peninsular Literature and Film, Science Fiction Studies, Women, Science, and Technology Studies, Online Instructional Design
Seung-Eun Chang Chapter 8	Linguistics, Phonology and Phonetics, Heritage Language Acquisition, Content-Based Language Teaching, Korean Language Teaching
Smita Daftardar Chapter 9	Hindi-Urdu Pedagogy, Heritage, and Foreign Language Acquisition
Vicki Galloway Chapter 10	Latin American Studies and Literature, Intercultural Education, Indigenous Studies, Language Pedagogy
Lu Liu Chapter 11	Asian Studies, Visual Culture Studies, Media Studies, the History of Science and Technology
Jin Liu Chapter 12	East Asian Languages and Cultures, Media Studies, Eco-cinema, Cultural Studies of Language
Jennifer Hirsch Conclusion	Cultural and Environmental Anthropology, Sustainability Studies, Equity and Social Justice Studies

Trained in the analysis and critique of a variety of texts—from literature to film; from visual and performative arts to digital media—the chapter contributors aim to model deep humanistic inquiry and analysis through the questions and assignments they propose. It is essential to recognize that this textbook is multi-authored on purpose, since no single scholar would have the expertise to cover all of the featured geographic, linguistic, and cultural traditions. By using regional and cultural experts as the individual chapter authors, *A Global Humanities Approach to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals* merges local insight and expertise with global scope and awareness.

A Global Humanities Approach to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals: Understanding Planet, People, and Prosperity is designed as a college-level textbook for courses in a wide range of disciplines. By using 12 global humanities texts from a variety of genres, this textbook has two main objectives. First, it strives to train students with a disciplinary background in the humanities to understand, apply, and evaluate the UN SDGs and the concept of sustainable development. Second, it aims to teach students with a disciplinary

background outside of the humanities to understand, analyze, and evaluate global humanities texts and their specific contributions—artistic, cultural, linguistic, etc.—to understanding and attaining a sustainable world. Overall, the book's approach intentionally sets out to break down disciplinary boundaries and to combine humanistic, artistic, ethical, social, cultural, political, scientific, technological, environmental, and economic discourses.

This textbook was written (2022–2023) and first published (2024) at approximately the midway point between the initial adoption of the UN SDGs in 2015 and the target year for their "full implementation" in 2030 (*Transforming Our World*). Of the 12 global humanities texts featured in Chapters 1–12, seven were published before the adoption of the UN SDGs in 2015: Fernando Contreras Castro's *Única Looking at the Sea* (1993[2]), Angés Varda's *The Gleaners and I* (2000), Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger* (2008), Ivan Sanjinés, Nicolás Ipamo and Alejandro Noza's *Cry of the Forest* (2008), Aya Hanabusa's *Holy Island* (2010), Hao Jingfang's "Folding Beijing" (2012), and Kip Andersen and Keegan Kuhn's *Cowspiracy: The Sustainability Secret* (2014). Two works—Barbara Dombrowski's *Tropic Ice: Dialog between Places Affected by Climate Change* (2010–2022) and Fabrice Monteiro's *The Prophecy* series (2013 to present)—began before 2015 and continued into the present decade. Three texts were published after the adoption of the UN SDGs: Wang Jiuliang's *Plastic China* (2016), Agustina Bazterrica's *Tender is the Flesh* (2017), and Kief Davidson and Pedro Kos's *Bending the Arc* (2017). The artists, authors, and directors of each featured global humanities text are historically positioned to reflect on the need for and successes and failures of these SDGs. They too bear witness to the state of "[o]ur world today" with its "immense challenges to sustainable development" in which "[b]illions of our citizens continue to live in poverty and are denied a life of dignity," in which we face "rising inequalities within and among countries" and "enormous disparities of opportunity, wealth and power," and in which we suffer from "[g]lobal health threats," "[n]atural resource depletion," and "environmental degradation" (*Transforming Our World*). They too must gauge whether this is also "a time of immense opportunity" in which "[s]ignificant progress has been made in meeting many development challenges" (*Transforming Our World*). Those using *A Global Humanities Approach to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals: Understanding Planet, People, and Prosperity* will continue these reflections on the need for and the successes and failures of the UN SDGs in meeting the world's sustainability challenges as we advance toward the target year of 2030 and beyond.

The textbook is divided into three parts. Each part treats four global humanities texts (one per chapter) and five or six of the SDGs as shown in Figure 0.2.

Within each chapter, there is a twofold approach: (1) use the featured text as the lens through which to explore the selected UN SDGs; (2) use the selected UN SDGs as a lens through which to explore the featured text. Despite the use of Parts to organize this textbook, the editor wishes to underscore the notion that the UN SDGs and their targets are—and should be—considered "integrated and indivisible" (*Transforming Our World*).

The textbook closes with a practical conclusion, "Think Global, Act Local: Partnerships and Projects (SDG 17)," which asks students to re-examine the 12 global humanities texts in relation to SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals). Students will identify examples from the texts of successful partnerships and also analyze the need for new or better partnerships. Additionally, this chapter offers a variety of final course projects that guide students in applying the Global Goals to local contexts. The final chapter also facilitates end-of-semester reflection and dialogue.

As explained above, *A Global Humanities Approach to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals: Understanding Planet, People, and Prosperity* addresses the Planet SDGs in Part 1, the People SDGs in Part 2, the Prosperity SDGs in Part 3, and SDG 17 on Partnerships in the Conclusion. This textbook's structure overlaps in clear ways with the notion of the "5 Ps" of People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace, and Partnership set forth in the *2030 Agenda*.

Part 1 - Planet: Relating Global Humanities Texts to UN SDGs 6, 7, 12, 13, 14, and 15


Part 2 - People: Relating Global Humanities Texts to UN SDGs 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5

Part 3 - Prosperity: Relating Global Humanities Texts to UN SDGs 8, 9, 10, 11, and 16

Figure 0.2 Textbook organization with United Nations sustainable development goals, https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/. Icons reprinted with permission. The content of this publication has not been approved by the United Nations and does not reflect the views of the United Nations or its officials or Member States.
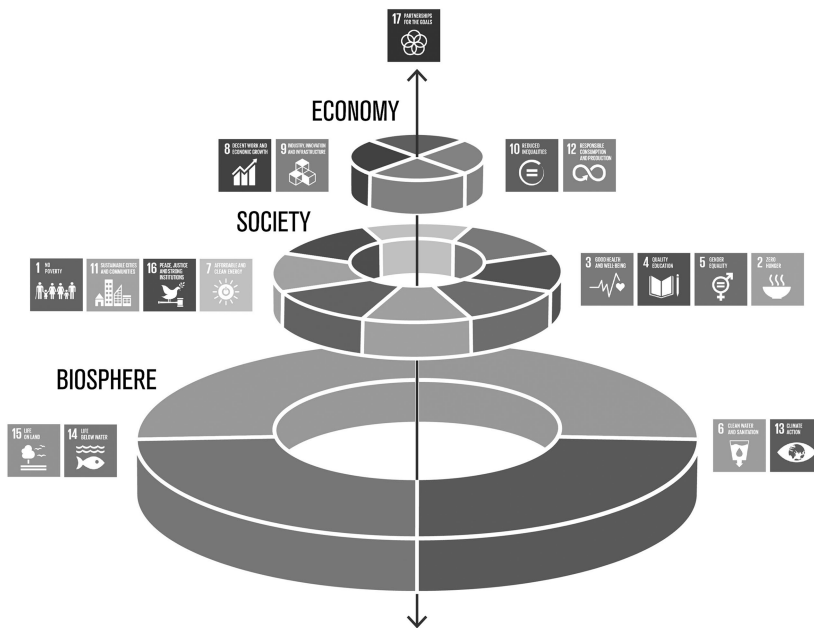
Figure 0.3 Grouping of UN SDGs into four categories: (1) Biosphere and Planet; (2) Society and People; (3) Economy and Prosperity; (4) Partnerships. Image by Azote, reprinted with permission from the Stockholm Resilience Centre.

This textbook focuses on three of the "five Ps" in the main three units: (1) Planet, (2) People, and (3) Prosperity, while Peace is treated as part of the unit on Prosperity, and Partnership is incorporated into the Conclusion. The textbook's organizational structure also partially coincides with the grouping model shown in Figure 0.2, often referred to as the "Wedding Cake" model for the SDGs.

The grouping of the SDGs in this textbook differs slightly insofar as it places SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy) and SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) in the section on Planet and SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) and SDG 16 (Peace Justice and Strong Institutions) in the section on Prosperity. The model in Figure 0.3 places SDG 17 (Partnership) in its own grouping as an area that cross-cuts the entire framework, which this textbook also does by incorporating SDG 17 into the textbook's concluding chapter. This textbook also follows the same order in that it starts with planet and then goes on to examine people, prosperity, and partnerships.

III   Global Humanities Texts and Chapter Summaries

Within each part on Planet, People, and Prosperity, chapters are arranged chronologically according to the publication date of the featured global humanities text. This section includes brief summaries of the 12 global humanities works treated in the textbook's chapters and provides details on the intersection of each text with the SDG framework. "Part 1: Planet and UN SDGs 6, 7, 12, 13, 14, and 15" includes two documentary films and two photographic collections in Chapters 1–4. "Part 2: People and UN SDGs 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5" includes two novels and two documentary films in Chapters 5–8. "Part 3: Prosperity and UN SDGs 8, 9, 10, 11, and 16" includes one novel, one short story, one feature film, and one documentary film in Chapters 9–12.

In "Chapter 1: Aya Hanabusa's *Holy Island*: Nuclear Power and Political Resistance in Iwaishima, Japan," Amanda Weiss examines the 2010 documentary film *Holy Island* and its treatment of nuclear resistance on Iwaishima (Iwai Island) in Western Japan. For decades, Iwaishima residents have resisted Chugoku Electric's Kaminoseki Nuclear Power Plant Project. As an island community of farmers and fishers deeply connected to the land and sea, the people are highly concerned about the potential ecological impact on Iwaishima and its surrounding waters. The film documents the daily lives and political resistance of the island's 500 residents, who not only face political challenges but also the pressures of an aging and declining population. The chapter first summarizes the historical context framing these protests, establishing how nuclear power and nuclear weapons are intertwining issues within Japanese discourse. Then, through a series of activities centered on a variety of SDGs, it explores both resident concerns over environmental impact (especially SDGs 6, 12, 14, and 15) as well as arguments in favor of the nuclear power plant (SDG 7).

In "Chapter 2: Barbara Dombrowski's *Tropic Ice: Dialog Between Places Affected by Climate Change* – Photographs and Art Installations of People and Landscapes," Britta Kallin explores four portraits, three art installations, and one landscape photograph from the period 2010–2022 that create a visual exchange between people living in different climate zones whose portraits act as ambassadors for their culture and geographic area. Dombrowski chose these locations because the indigenous people in these areas are the ones who will be affected by climate change first, even though they have hardly contributed to carbon dioxide emissions. They still live in harmony with nature, hunt only what they can eat, and do not follow a Western lifestyle. This chapter offers student-centered activities that explore *Tropic Ice* in terms of Clean Water and Life below Water (SDGs 6 and 14) as well as Affordable and Clean Energy, Responsible Consumption and Production, Climate Action, and Life on Land (SDGs 7, 12, 13, and 15).

In "Chapter 3: Fabrice Monteiro's *The Prophecy*: Trash Art Photography Protests Trashing the Planet," Kelly Comfort analyzes the work of Fabrice Monteiro, a Belgian-Beninese photographer working out of Senegal. Monteiro's *The Prophecy* collection began in 2013 with plans to take 9 photographs in Senegal, although the collection currently includes 15 photographs taken in 7 countries. Monteiro, in collaboration with Senegalese fashion designer Jah Gal, uses upcycled waste to create the costumes of the featured djinn in each image, thus employing a unique trash aesthetic to promote his environmental message. This chapter examines six of these photographs in terms of the six Planet-related UN SDGs treated in Part 1. SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation) and SDG 14 (Life below Water) are the focus of three images: "Untitled #2" portrays the problem of oil spills for marine and coastal ecosystems; "Untitled #3" depicts untreated waste running directly into the Atlantic Ocean; "Untitled #10" exposes coral bleaching and marine biodiversity loss in Australia's Great Barrier Reef. SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) and SDG 13 (Climate Action) are targeted in "Untitled #1," which calls attention to unsustainable production, overconsumption, and failed waste management, and in "Untitled #9," which shows the problem of charcoal and wood consumption and points to the need for SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy). Four images ("Untitled #1," "Untitled #3," "Untitled #5," and "Untitled #9") address SDG 15 (Life on Land) as they protest land and air pollution, soil erosion, deforestation, and desertification.

In "Chapter 4: Kip Andersen and Keegan Kuhn's *Cowspiracy*: Animal Agriculture and the 'Sustainability Secret,'" Natalie Khazaal analyzes this provocative yet humourous documentary (2014–2015) about the animal agriculture industry and its negative consequences in terms of greenhouse gas production, species extinction, deforestation, polluted water supplies, weakened biodiversity, increased air pollution, Amazon rainforest destruction, and augmented waste pollution. Although these consequences make animal agriculture a leading cause of environmental destruction, the filmmakers discovered that most environmental organizations never address this issue. In the film, they try to understand the depths and reasons for this failure, inspired by the words of Martin Luther King, Jr.: "In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends." This chapter examines the film's artistic and scientific aspects and how they engage with SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation), SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy), SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), SDG 13 (Climate Action), SDG 14 (Life below Water), and SDG 15 (Life on Land).

In "Chapter 5: Fernando Contreras Castro's Única Looking at the Sea: Marginalization, Community, and Politics from a Garbage Dump," Miguel Rosas Buendía examines a Costa Rican novel published in 1993, whose first English translation appeared in 2017. Única Looking at the Sea tells the story of a marginalized community that inhabits a garbage dump next to Río Azul (Blue River), a fictional suburb near the Costa Rican capital, San José. The narration follows scavengers' daily lives as they become a gateway to reflect on the issue of garbage production and, more importantly, on the extent to which a sense of community can be built within this precarious setting. This chapter covers five UN SDGs through the novel. The dump as an impoverished location and its inhabitants as marginalized individuals allow us to explore SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), and SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being). This narration suggests that the persistence of these profound social problems is intrinsically related to systems of production and consumption. The main character, Única, is a woman who acts as a leader within the dump and against the dump's closing. Her noticeable personality speaks about the crucial role of women in imagining powerful forms of leadership (SDG 5, Gender Equality). Finally, education as a human right (SDG 4, Quality Education) is addressed in the novel through both Única as former schoolteacher and a male character, Mondolfo, as former worker at the National Library.

In "Chapter 6: Agnès Varda's *The Gleaners and I*: From Waste to Wonder—A Cinematic Odyssey on Food Loss and Gleaning," Stéphanie Boulard explores a documentary film from 2000 that delves into issues such as food poverty, hunger, food wastage, ecology, art, and autobiography. The film investigates the concept of gleaning in France and its various forms, including human trash-picking and art built on recycled materials, revealing the vast amounts of food wasted in France and its impact on food poverty. While this chapter highlights the value of gleaning in reducing food loss and waste and ensuring food security, it also analyzes the film's socio-environmental commentary on postmodern consumerism and explores themes of compassion, fragility, and marginalization. The film challenges traditional beauty standards by showcasing subjects that are typically excluded from mainstream media, such as elderly individuals, homeless people, and those who do not conform to societal norms of beauty. Additionally, Varda's film not only provokes reflection on the portrayal of women in history (SDG 5) but also offers insights on the interconnectedness of social and environmental justice (SDG 16). *The Gleaners and I* aligns with several UN SDGs, including No Poverty (SDG 1), Zero Hunger (SDG 2), Responsible Consumption and Production (SDG 12), and Quality Education (SDG 4), emphasizing the need for greater social and economic equality and environmental sustainability. The chapter also emphasizes the importance of individual action in promoting positive change and fostering a more equitable and sustainable world.

In "Chapter 7: Agustina Bazterrica's *Tender is the Flesh*: Devouring Each Other in Consumerist Society," Mirla Gonzalez examines the science fiction novel *Tender is the Flesh* (2017) by Argentinian author, Agustina Bazterrica. The novel portrays an oppressive society in which a virus has contaminated all animal meat, which paves the way for government-legalized cannibalism and the creation of a society in which animals and certain groups of human beings, particularly women, endure the same levels of cruelty and savagery. This chapter analyzes gender-based violence, as well as the marginalization of other vulnerable populations such as immigrants in the context of a consumerist and capitalist society obsessed with meat consumption that has undergone an environmental catastrophe. This environmental challenge, in the form of a viral outbreak, provides the groundwork for a discussion on SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being). Economic inequality, one of the many consequences of the outbreak that has created this dystopian cannibalistic society, allows for an analysis of SDG 1 (No Poverty) and SDG 2 (Zero Hunger). Lastly, through the female protagonist, the novel brings attention to SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 5 (Gender Equality), drawing parallels to gender (in)equality and femicide in contemporary society.

In "Chapter 8: Kief Davidson and Pedro Kos's *Bending the Arc*: Public Health Pioneers Fight for Universal Health Equity and Global Justice," Seung-Eun Chang analyzes a 2017 award-winning documentary film. *Bending the Arc* depicts the inspiring battle beginning 30 years ago to save lives in a rural Haitian village through relevant photos, historic world news videos, and the narratives of Dr. Paul Farmer, Dr. Jim Yong Kim, Ophelia Dahl, and other extraordinary doctors and patients who participated in this endeavor. The film highlights their brave and persistent fight against insurmountable obstacles to bring medical care to the poorest people in some of the most neglected regions around the world and ultimately for the right to health for all. The text is not only directly related to the health issue (SDG 3) in Haiti but also connects to poverty (SDG 1), hunger (SDG 2), education (SDG 4), gender equality (SDG 5), and justice (SDG 16) in any community in the world. This chapter examines ways to create sustainable communities and societies through the topics of SDGs 1–5 and explores the role of non-profit organizations such as Partners in Health in this endeavor.

In "Chapter 9: Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger*: Stagnation or Social Mobility in Modern India," Smita Daftardar analyzes this award-winning Indian novel published in 2008. *The White*

Tiger tells the story of Balram, a young man who has grown up in poverty and ultimately takes to a life of crime to escape the hopelessness of servitude. The novel begins by pointing out the need for SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 1 (No Poverty), since the protagonist's lack of education and overall destitution set the story in motion. As Balram grows older and leaves his village to seek out work and opportunity in the city, the story focuses on the Prosperity-related SDGs, especially SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure), SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions). By depicting the opposite of these SDGs, *The White Tiger* highlights the vicious cycle of poverty, the lack of opportunity for economic advancement and social mobility, and the exclusionary practices inherent in a large power-distance society.

In "Chapter 10: Ivan Sanjinés, Nicolás Ipamo and Alejandro Noza's *Cry of the Forest*: Sustainable Development and the Indigenous Communities of Bolivia," Vicki Galloway examines a Bolivian feature film from 2008 that is a collective production funded by indigenous community organizations and educational centers and led by indigenous filmmakers. *Cry of the Forest* demonstrates the interconnectedness of all four dimensions of sustainability—economic, environmental, social, and cultural—and the impacts of decision making based on immediate economic gain. The film also reveals the complex relation that indigenous communities have historically had with a logging industry that has marginalized them as menial workers on their own lands and whose concepts of "territory" as ownership and "nature" as a consumable commodity are in conflict with their cultural values. While the film readily lends itself to examination of sustainable practices in forest management and sourcing in wood-product manufacturing (SDGs 8, 9, and 12), it also provokes reflection in both story and production process on the power of community dignity, solidarity, and activism in achieving voice and creating change and equity (SDGs 10 and 11). Importantly, *Cry of the Forest* takes us inside the indigenous community to hear and witness the cultural dialogue of everyday life whose values and practices may differ from our own, such as decision-making and power structures and the meaning of gender "equality" (SDG 5) and concepts of health, medicine, and well-being (SDG 3) that are directly tied to the cry of the forest.

In "Chapter 11: Hao Jingfang's 'Folding Beijing': Unequal Time and Space in a Dystopian City," Lu Liu examines a 2012 science-fiction short story from a Hugo award-winning Chinese writer. Set in a futuristic Beijing that is divided into three segregated zones, "Folding Beijing" follows the journey of a waste worker named Lao Dao, from the lowest Third Space to the elite First Space. From Lao Dao's perspective, the story reveals the irony of technologized development that selectively renders human labor invisible and reinforces structural inequality. This chapter examines how the story's realistic and speculative style dramatizes and elicits actions to tackle challenges of sustainability in terms of decent work (SDG 8), infrastructure design and construction (SDG 9), access to resources (SDG 10), urban planning and community building (SDG 11), and non-discriminatory policy-making (SDG 16). Additionally, contextualizing the story in China's social reality, the questions and assignments designed in this chapter serve as a starting point to interrogate how the abject condition of urban working classes is often overshadowed by explosive economic growth and stigmatized as low-end.

In "Chapter 12: Wang Jiuliang's *Plastic China*: Unveiling the Façade of Prosperity," Jin Liu explores how this 2016 Chinese documentary follows the members of two families who spend their lives sorting and recycling plastic waste from the United States, Europe, and Asia. Yi-Jie, an 11-year-old girl, works alongside her parents in a recycling facility while dreaming of attending school. Kun, the facility's ambitious boss, dreams of buying a new car and a better life. Through the experience of these two families, this poignant film explores key issues

on sustainability. As Kun transforms from an agricultural peasant to an industrial worker and Yijie's family migrates from the rural villages to coastal cities for job opportunities, the text is closely related to SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure), and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities). Moreover, the imported trash has degraded the natural landscape, ruined the local community, and made Kun's hometown inhabitable and unsustainable, thus relating to SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) and SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being). In addition, a major narrative theme is the migrant girl's desire to go to school, so this text is closely related to SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 5 (Gender Equality).

IV   A Guide to Instructors on How to Use This Textbook

This final section offers guidelines to instructors on how best to use this textbook and outlines best practices for course design and lesson planning.

1   *Course Design*

The best way to use this textbook is to progress in order through the parts and their respective chapters. A sample week-by-week syllabus for a semester-long class would thus be as follows:

Week 1—Overview of ESD and the UN SDGs (Introduction)
Week 2—Planet SDGs - Chapter 1
Week 3—Planet SDGs - Chapter 2
Week 4—Planet SDGs - Chapter 3
Week 5—Planet SDGs - Chapter 4
Week 6—People SDGs - Chapter 5
Week 7—People SDGs - Chapter 6
Week 8—People SDGs - Chapter 7
Week 9—People SDGs - Chapter 8
Week 10—Prosperity SDGs - Chapter 9
Week 11—Prosperity SDGs - Chapter 10
Week 12—Prosperity SDGs - Chapter 11
Week 13—Prosperity SDGs - Chapter 12
Week 14—Partnerships SDG and Final Projects
Week 15—Partnerships SDG and Final Projects

This approach makes the UN SDGs and the focus on planet, people, prosperity, and partnerships the main organizing framework for the course. Instructors teaching during a shorter time frame (quarter system or accelerated summer term) may want to teach only nine of the twelve texts by eliminating one chapter from each of the three parts.

Alternatively, an instructor might choose to employ a thematic grouping of texts around issues of: waste (Chapters 3, 5, 6, and 12); food and health (Chapters 4, 7, and 8); environmental challenges (Chapters 1, 2, and 10); and economic challenges (Chapters 9 and 11). While not the intended structure, this thematic approach could work particularly well for a team-taught course that brings together disciplinary experts from a variety of fields such as engineering, healthcare, environmental studies, business, and economics.

Finally, the course could be designed around geographical areas as follows: North America (Chapters 4 and 8); Latin America (Chapters 5, 7, and 10); Europe (Chapters 2 and 6); Asia

(Chapters 1, 9, 11, and 12); and Africa (Chapter 13). This structure, which adopts a place-based and culturally rooted approach to the 12 humanities texts, would work best for courses that are team-taught by cultural and regional experts from these chosen areas. Additionally, this grouping of texts would be appropriate for courses offered as part of the curriculum in cultural, global, or area studies. The challenge with this grouping, however, is that many chapters include authors and/or texts that cross national and regional borders. For instance, Chapter 8 traces the work of a US-based organization (Partners in Health) doing work abroad in Haiti, Peru, and Rwanda, while Chapter 3 examines a photographic series by a Belgian-Beninese artist whose selected work includes images taken in Senegal and Australia, and Chapter 2 treats a German photographer whose art installations combine images from various places around the globe that are most threatened by climate change. This approach also reveals inadequate treatment of Africa as a region, even though the textbook intentionally includes a variety of texts from the Global South. Instructors may thus wish to incorporate additional texts from Africa if using this geographical structure.

2   *Lesson Planning*

Each chapter (1–12) follows the same structure and is divided into seven sections:

- In Section I, "Text," the chapter's author provides basic information about the title and genre of the selected text as well as the author, artist, or director of the work and its publication date and country of origin. This section also anthologizes the two photographic collections in Chapters 2 and 3 and provides details on how instructors and students can access each of the additional 10 texts.
- Section II, "Context," gives relevant and detailed background information—social, cultural, historical, etc.—on the work to help instructors and students better understand the text.
- Section III, "Interpretation," includes a total of ten questions aimed at literary, filmic, or photographic analysis of the featured text. This section aims to build skills in textual analysis and humanities-centered interpretation.
- Section IV, titled "Planet-Focused Applications to SDGs 6, 7, 12, 13, 14, and 15" for the chapters in Part 1, "People-Focused Applications to SDGs 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5" for the chapters in Part 2, and "Prosperity-Focused Applications to SDGs 8, 9, 10, 11, and 16" for the chapters in Part 3, includes 15 specific questions about how the chapter's text intersects and engages with the specific SDGs. Within Section V, questions integrate the related SDGs in numerical order and culminate in a penultimate question involving a class debate on the application of the selected SDGs to the featured text and a final question asking how the global humanities text in the chapter not only reinforces or illuminates the principles underpinning the UN SDGs and the concept of sustainable development, but so too questions any inherent presuppositions, biases, shortcomings, flaws, or gaps in the UN SDG framework or in the notion of sustainable development.
- Section V, alternatively titled "Beyond Planet – Connections to SDGs on People, Prosperity, and Partnerships" for the chapters in Part 1, "Beyond People – Connections to SDGs on Planet, Prosperity, and Partnerships" for the chapters in Part 2, and "Beyond Prosperity – Connections to SDGs on Planet, People, and Partnerships" for the chapters in Part 3, facilitates connections by asking students to complete and discuss a chart that applies the chapter text to the other SDGs. For example, in a chapter from Part 1, instructors and students consider the relationship between the text and the "non-Planet" SDGs, which are 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11, 16, and 17.
- Section VI, "From Global to Local: On a Personal Level," poses three questions that ask students to consider how the text relates to them on a personal level, relates to their local

environment, and elicits a response in them by changing their point of view and/or by moving them to action.

- Finally, Section VII, "Assignments," includes prompts for two research assignments, two writing assignments, and two creative assignments that relate to both the global humanities text and the most relevant SDGs.

Instructors and students are advised to progress through these seven sections in order.

It is important to recognize that this textbook has far more questions and activities than it is possible to complete in a given university-level course. Although the book is designed for a semester-long course of roughly 15 weeks, neither all chapter questions can be posed nor can all assignments be given. Instructors will need to pick and choose the most relevant and interesting questions and prompts for their course. Teachers from the humanities may wish to ask more questions from Section III, for example, while those from other disciplines may wish to focus more on the questions in Sections IV and V. Instructors will also want to avoid repetition and redundancy to keep the course fresh and engaging, so they might skip certain questions in one chapter, but discuss them in another chapter, based on which questions they deem most relevant to each assigned text. Additionally, they may wish to assign some sections for homework (I and II), while leaving others for in-class discussion (III, IV, and V), and others for post-class follow-up activities and assignments (VI and VII). Although most questions will be discussed orally in class through a combination of small group and whole class discussion, some questions can be assigned as written work in the form of homework, quizzes, reflection assignments, or online discussion threads. Similarly, instructors may wish to divide the class into groups according to the textbook's three parts (planet, people, and prosperity) or its 12 chapters (1–12) and only give an assignment from Section VII to the students responsible for that particular part or chapter, so that not all students will do all assignments. Since each chapter includes six assignments in Section VII, instructors will need to decide which one(s) are most useful for their students and how many should be assigned per chapter, unit, or course. Some instructors may choose to assign only the "research" prompts, while others will assign the "write" prompts, and still others will assign the "create" prompts. Alternatively, instructors may choose to let students decide which option—research, write, or create—is most appealing.

Finally, instructors will also have to decide on the most suitable approach to the "Think Global, Act Local: Partnerships and Projects (SDG 17)" concluding chapter. It is recommended that instructors first lead the class in a consideration of SDG 17 using the information provided in Section I, titled "Summary of SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals." Next, instructors should facilitate a discussion of question 1 and question 3 (Part A only) from Section II, titled "Partnerships and Projects: Global Humanities Texts." Lastly, instructors should choose one or two of the final projects from the eight options presented in Sections 2 and 3 to assign to students. Final project options include:

- Proposing a new organizational structure for this textbook using a different SDG grouping model and the same 12 global humanities texts;
- Designing a curricular development project using selected ESD themes;
- Developing a global partnership to address a selected issue of importance to two or more featured authors, artists, or directors;
- Analyzing published critiques of the UN SDGs;
- Writing a new textbook chapter based on a selected local humanities text;
- Exploring a local sustainability challenge and creating a new humanities text;

- Researching a local educational effort that advances the SDGs;
- Developing a course lesson about a local partnership that advances the SDGs.

Alternatively, instructors could allow students to choose the final project option(s). Final projects are designed to be completed in groups, although individual completion is possible. Instructors should allow for class time for final project presentations, as this contributes to students' overall learning and promotes end-of-course reflection and dialogue.

Notes

1 In the 2023 article "From Global Studies to Global Humanities," Stefan Amirell maps out the history of the humanities, global studies, and the global humanities. This section of the "Introduction" is greatly indebted to his illuminating article.
2 Fernando Contreras Castro's novel *Única Looking at the Sea* is the only text included in this book that was not published in the 2000s. The decision to include this novel is based on the fact that the first English translation appeared in 2017, making the book only recently accessible to an English-speaking audience. All other global humanities texts are from the current millennium.

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