

Call for Papers

“The Future of the SDGs”

GLOBALGOALS2024

An International Research Conference

Utrecht, The Netherlands | 29-30 August 2024

BACKGROUND

The adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) was welcomed by practitioners and academics alike as a momentous step forward in global sustainability governance. And yet, an increasing body of studies suggests that the SDGs have failed to transform political and economic systems. Moreover, most SDGs are found to be not on track to be achieved by 2030. This sober assessment of the academic community is shared by many policy-makers; the United Nations Secretary-General has even called upon governments “to rescue” the SDGs. 2024 is the halfway point in SDG implementation and a crucial moment to adjust and transform the SDG agenda. Concurrently, the United Nations will host in September 2024 a [Summit of the Future](#), aiming to strengthen global sustainability governance by adopting further bold reforms.

Given these crucial developments, the global scientific community is called upon to develop and synthesize the much-needed knowledge and evidence-based insights about the factors that explain the limited success of the SDGs, the many barriers that block their achievement, and the key reforms to be taken. Academic research is also needed to assess the effectiveness of “governance by global goals” more broadly and to point towards global institutional reforms after 2030, when the current SDGs expire.

The international research conference GLOBALGOALS2024—*The Future of the SDGs*, to be held 29-30 August 2024 in Utrecht, the Netherlands, is designed as the much-needed forum to advance theoretical reflection and empirical, actionable knowledge on the success of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. The Conference will offer a broad global platform to share and discuss new ideas for the future of the SDGs and global sustainability governance. Importantly, the Conference will offer ample space for transdisciplinarity and contributions by non-academic experts, aiming to combine academic and non-academic policy proposals. Overall, GLOBALGOALS2024 is expected to be a critical academic stepping-stone in preparing for the UN Summit of the Future in September 2024.

AN OPEN SPACE FOR “RESEARCH PAPERS” AND “TRANSFORMATIVE IDEAS”

GLOBALGOALS2024 welcomes two types of contributions, Research Papers and Transformative Ideas. Research Papers are traditional academic research contributions; they may offer new theoretical insights and frameworks, new empirical research findings, or broader systematic reviews of the literature. Transformative Ideas are non-traditional contributions that seek to lay out, in a clear and convincing way, novel ideas about the manifold transformations needed to achieve the SDGs en route to 2030 as well as how a future, post-2030 agenda should look like. While Transformative Ideas can be submitted by academics, this new format targets especially non-academic experts, including representatives of thinktanks, civil society organizations, and youth movements.

FIVE CONFERENCE STREAMS

Research Papers and Transformative Ideas should relate to one or more of the five conference streams:

1. **Acceleration of SDG Implementation.** Despite the disappointing results of the mid-term review of the SDGs, there are still six years to accelerate their implementation and to shift gears towards a transformative implementation process. Yet what policies and instruments are likely to be effective in achieving this? GLOBALGOALS2024 invites Research Papers and Transformative Ideas that point to novel policies or measures that can help to achieve the SDGs and other promises of the Agenda for Sustainable Development. We also invite papers on the role of SDGs in legal systems and how civil society uses the SDGs to hold actors to account.
2. **Differentiation and Dynamization of the SDGs:** The SDGs are framed as a global, universal normative vision that needs to be implemented in national and local contexts. GLOBALGOALS2024 invites Research Papers and Transformative Ideas to focus on this adaptive process that the SDGs undergo during their implementation at diverse levels of governance, reflecting on specific local and national challenges and capacities, and different political economies, institutions, and aspirations. This stream presents studies of the crucial factors of differentiation and dynamization and whether and how such processes contribute to greater overall effectiveness of sustainability governance.
3. **Reforming the SDGs:** GLOBALGOALS2024 also invites Research Papers and Transformative Ideas that more broadly investigate possible avenues to transform global sustainability governance and the SDG process. Papers might discuss for instance changes of the global financial institutions, reforms of the United Nations, or the further legalization and institutionalization of the SDGs. The stream also welcomes Research Papers and Transformative Ideas that question the framework of multilateral cooperation in a context of geopolitical tensions that threaten sustainability policies, and papers on innovative and novel governance arrangements adopted by governments, civil society, social movements, international organizations, or the private sector.
4. **The Future of Sustainability:** Related to this stream, GLOBALGOALS2024 invites Research Papers and Transformative Ideas that discuss the link between sustainability governance and futures thinking. GLOBALGOALS2024 will take stock of multiple perspectives and research findings about future generations, strategic foresight, scenarios of SDG implementation, the power of youth engagement, and global sustainability governance post-2030.
5. **The Role of Science and Knowledge:** Finally, GLOBALGOALS2024 invites Research Papers and Transformative Ideas on the development, use and integration of knowledge and expertise in sustainability policymaking and how the science-policy interface can better support the success of the SDGs. The stream will also consider how Indigenous and local knowledge has been used in designing and reviewing progress of the SDGs, as well as critical perspectives on the interlinkages between knowledge and power imbalances in sustainability governance. Finally, GLOBALGOALS2024 welcomes papers on innovations in research on the SDGs and global sustainability governance, from studies that present major methodological advancement to new forms of relationship between scientific and non-academic communities.

ABSTRACT SUBMISSION

If you plan to participate in the GLOBALGOALS2024 conference and to present either a Research Paper or a Transformative Idea, please send the title, keywords and an abstract of less than 300 words in the body of an e-mail to: globalgoals2024@uu.nl. Please include your name and complete institutional affiliation. In the e-mail subject line, state to which of the five conference streams listed above your paper relates best. For the schedule of submission deadlines and registration process see below.

DEADLINE

The Call for Papers closes on 8 April 2024.

CONFERENCE STATEMENT “THE FUTURE OF THE SDGS”

The international research conference GLOBALGOALS2024—*The Future of the SDGs* will launch a Conference Statement “The Future of the SDGs”, which will be agreed during the conference and widely published afterwards, pointing the way towards reforms that governments and other actors might take during the UN Summit of the Future and policy processes in the following years. All registered authors of Research Papers and Transformative Ideas presented at the conference will be invited to join the drafting process of this Conference Statement and be listed in any further publication of this statement, if they so wish.

EXPECTED OUTPUTS

All abstracts submitted on time will be shared online on our conference website. A selection of the presented papers will be submitted for publication, either as a journal special issue or an edited volume, in the Fall of 2024.

ORGANIZING INSTITUTIONS

Co-chairs

- FRANK BIERMANN, director, GLOBALGOALS Project, Utrecht University
- GUILHERME DE QUEIROZ STEIN, GLOBALGOALS Project, Utrecht University
- MARA WENDEBOURG, GLOBALGOALS Project, Utrecht University
- FRONIKA DE WIT, GLOBALGOALS Project, Utrecht University

International Steering Committee

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- INES DOMBROWSKY, German Institute of Development and Sustainability, Germany
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- THOMAS HICKMANN, Department of Political Science, Lund University, Sweden
- LOUIS KOTZÉ, North-West University, South Africa
- SHIRIN MALEKPOUR, Monash Sustainable Development Institute, Monash University, Australia
- ANDREA ORDÓÑEZ LLANOS, Southern Voice, Ecuador
- ÅSA PERSSON, Stockholm Environment Institute and Linköping University, Sweden
- PRAJAL PRADHAN, Energy and Sustainability Research Institute Groningen, University of Groningen, The Netherlands, and Nepal

- JOHAN SCHOT, Utrecht University Centre for Global Challenges and Economic and Social History group, Utrecht University, The Netherlands
- MICHELLE SCOBIE, Institute of International Relations, The University of the West Indies, Trinidad and Tobago
- CAROLE-ANNE SÉNIT, Copernicus Institute of Sustainable Development, Utrecht University, The Netherlands
- YIXIAN SUN, University of Bath, United Kingdom

Host and Co-hosting Institutions

Copernicus Institute of Sustainable Development, Utrecht University, The Netherlands



Earth System Governance Project (Taskforce on the Sustainable Development Goals)



European Research Council, Advanced Grant for the GLOBALGOALS Project



Centre for Development Studies, University of Bath, United Kingdom



German Institute of Development and Sustainability, Bonn, Germany



Department of Political Science, Lund University, Sweden



Oslo SDG Initiative, University of Oslo, Norway



Utrecht University, Strategic Programme “Pathways to Sustainability”



IMPORTANT DATES

ABSTRACT SUBMISSION OPEN	4 March
ABSTRACT SUBMISSION DEADLINE	8 April
ABSTRACT ACCEPTANCE NOTIFICATION	15 April
REGISTRATION OPEN (EARLY BIRD)	15 April
END OF EARLY BIRD REGISTRATION	15 May
REGISTRATION FOR PAPER PRESENTATIONS CLOSES	7 July
MEETING OF SDG TASKFORCE EARTH SYSTEM GOVERNANCE PROJECT	28 August
GLOBALGOALS2024 CONFERENCE	29-30 August