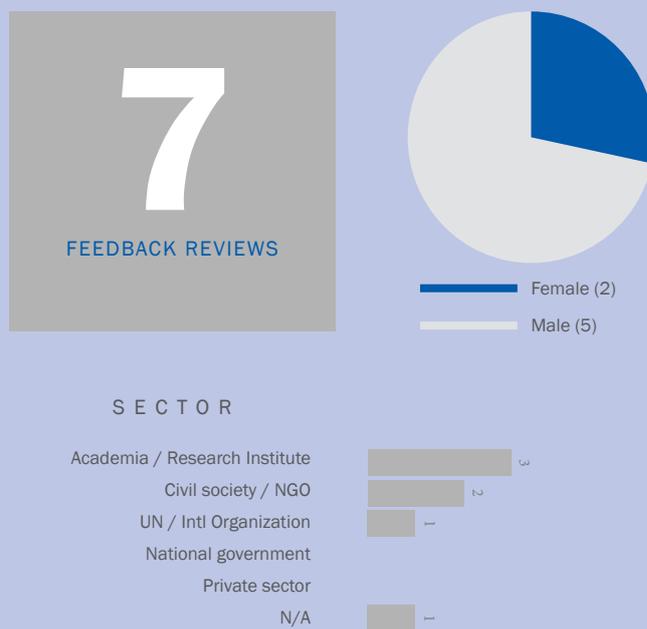


Policy Innovations *for* Transformative Change

Driving the Eco-Social Turn: Governance and Politics (Chapter 7)



Demographic data about users who read and commented on this chapter:



As a learning organization that aims to be inclusive of diverse perspectives and responsive to our constituents, we held a consultation prior to the launch of our 2016 Flagship Report to make sure our work reflects the needs of our users.

On a scale from one (low) to five (high), users rated this chapter based on three criteria:

QUALITY
4,0

READABILITY
4,2

USEFULNESS
4,5



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Compendium of substantive feedback

Based on your knowledge and understanding, are we presenting an accurate picture of the topic?

Participant 4

The chapter gives a critical overview of most of the current “solutions” for horizontal and vertical policy coherence and the potential for transformative change with the Agenda 2030. It is a very distinct contribution seeing the critical assessment of often-coined solutions such as “partnerships” and “participation”.

The problem analysis is very accurate and precise and the local, national and (to some extent) global policy levels are adequately addressed seeing the number of pages. Also the non-state actors (especially CSOs, private sector and “activists” in the broadest sense) and their roles are described in sufficient detail and with concrete examples.

Nevertheless, there is an important omission and the “legal” and “political” part of the chapter needs greater detail. As regards the omission, overall I miss the regional perspective (MERCOSUR, ASEAN, ECOWAS, EU) and what would be expected from them in the “eco-social turn”. They certainly have a role to fulfil as their integration is especially based on economic gains.

Furthermore, the legal analysis needs greater detail, especially how the current multilateral agreements and international institutions could “enable” transformative change instead of impeding transformative change. This could also result in an overview of international institutions where real systemic institutional (and legal!) change is needed.

Above all the chapter needs some addition on political representation. What would be needed from political representatives and in what way can they enable transformative change? Is it even possible to ask political representatives to play such a role seeing the short electoral cycles?

Participant 6

Overall, I found the report very nuanced, forward-thinking, and insightful. It explored a number of topics I see as being critical to truly transformative change. These include: unpacking the concept of transformation itself and identifying potential pathways to transformation; the concepts of social, conceptual, and discursive innovation, wealth creation serving humanity and humanizing the economy; adjusting the normative hierarchy in international governance; opportunities for participation beyond “having a seat at the table”; the concept of subsidiarity; and multi-level, multi-directional coherence.

Are the policy conclusions and recommendations useful?

Participant 4

For a researcher international relations the policy conclusions and recommendations are useful as they are distinct from many other (multilateral policy, academic) contributions. Especially the critical assessment of PPPs and “participation” is very useful as this is most often, without any criticism, proposed as the (post-2015) solution for global governance and transformative change. In this way, this publication goes beyond many approaches to global governance and transformative change. Also the general problem analysis is clear and useful. Nevertheless, I do miss some “regional” policy conclusions as I would consider this as a very important level of governance, also for ecological and social problems. Furthermore, I appreciate the analysis of legal contributions but this is not brought further: is systemic change needed? An overhaul of multilateral agreement? An end of treaties? And what would be legal ways to “enable” transformative change? Further elaboration is needed legally, institutionally and politically. Otherwise, the chapter would most likely be seen as too abstract for policy makers, CSOs and the private sector despite the great examples of best practices in cities and countries.

Participant 5

There are two statements in this chapter which are of fundamental importance and those are in the conclusions. I comment on it:

1. An exercise of free choice (the free determination of the kind of development model to be promoted) should be left to different societies and cultures and not imposed by patterns or norms which are stranger or don't belong to a determined culture or society. But this is unfortunately not the case in a world where the free market (which has become the dominant paradigm) along with institutions at its service in reality

tends to drive the choices of the peoples; is an active generator of needs; and tend to uniform tastes and visions. Free participation of peoples able to generate the necessary transformation is hence undermined while standardisation to determined patterns generating passive acceptance and indifference is then at its peak. This is what really makes any transformation at this stage impossible. A counter narrative should be developed and promoted as the Communist was. Present times are really suffering from the primacy of one sided vision without the presence of a countering narrative having global support. The only possible counter narrative has to focus on tangible interests and also have a united and recognisable social actor behind it. I could elaborate more on it and define this last concept but leave it open for the moment.

2. It is true that adjustment towards more social-democratic settings is more likely to be accepted. Even by private sector during crises. As an economic policy instrument to sustain the demand. But this reveals, then, that any vision for social justice aimed at promoting welfare redistribution is structurally incompatible and at odds with the economic system based on free market. I think that this dichotomy cannot be regulated. Any regulation would imply at least a fiscal regime where the progressivity of taxation would be strictly applied (both tax on capital and property). This is impeded by the absence of an economic global governance wanting it as well as by the absolute primacy of financial activity over so called real economy. I don't think that something can be done to reform it from the top (so normative vision) unless one thinks about a global change coming from the bottom and inspired by other paradigms (like for example degrowth). This is certainly more possible at local level and within a communitarian framework but with more than half of the world's population living in urban areas and with the myths of growth constantly and systematically aired at any level of public sphere (school, media, politics, economics) the unsustainable growth of present times is likely going to perpetuate itself despite any rhetoric appeal to change coming from the same who seem to have brought things, I am afraid to say, to a point of no-return.

Participant 6

I generally found the policy recommendations to be helpful and on-point. One element that could be added are recommendations on the formulation of policy development or the "process of policy". Many themes in this area focus on learning and the sources from which UN bodies seek answers to global problems. For example: How is expertise defined and how might that definition be expanded? What are identity or ideological attachments that prevent people or agencies from learning? How can international fora be structured in ways that conduce to shared exploration and collaborative inquiry, rather than mere reporting and unidirectional presentation?

Are we missing something? (Examples, data, etc.)

Participant 1

Maybe this idea of including non-lawyers as adjudicators in ISDS might be of your interest .

<http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstractid=2804197>

Participant 2

How social justice movements and human rights advocacy can play a greater role in pushing for greater transparency in international finance and economic globalization that hinder the creation of effective multi-lateral global governance institutions that can actually realize the true potential for transformation promised in the 2030 SDG agenda.

Participant 3

I do find chapter 7 to be good bringing out some of the key issues and denouncing the aspirational character of the SDGs. I have some comment that may be of interest:

- What does it really mean to "leave no one behind"? Communities are not forgetfully left behind... It is the neoliberal policies that systematically exclude them.
- The "coherence" you call for contradicts your rightly pointing out the ideological interests that always taint final decisions. The same is true for calls for multidisciplinary. Multidisciplinary: Attempts at acting in the context of basic causes depart from a flawed analysis of reality and have consequently mostly failed (and are doomed to continue to fail). Among the most prominent of these are "Multidisciplinary Approaches" to solve the problems of so many different human rights violations. There is nothing terribly wrong with this concept, but it just gratuitously assumes that looking at the problem of these violations from a "wider" multi-professional perspective is going to automatically lead us to the better, more rational and egalitarian solutions. The call for multidisciplinary, for sharing paradigms amongst the different scientific disciplines where practitioners come from, falls under the same optic of my criticism all along. Just by putting together brains "sowed" differently, without considering where they are coming from ideologically, is not going to, all of a sudden, make a significant difference in the outcome and the options chosen. They may well stay in the

domain of immediate causes, only now everybody involved contributing a small mono-disciplinary window to the package of (still pat?) solutions proposed.

- Multidisciplinary approaches –as opposed to a dialectical approach– simply most often take the social and political context (i.e., the individual and institutional power relations) as given; they therefore end up being conservative in their recommendations. Multidisciplinarity or intersectorality (or seeking coherence) is akin to adopting a “shishkebab mentality” where we keep worrying about the morsels (each sector), but we are doomed because we forget the skewer (the prevailing neoliberal ideology). The essence of the problem thus transcends its intersectoral nature. Comprehensiveness cannot be obtained by achieving all-inclusiveness of the parts, but by adhering to a new philosophy into which all parts mesh (i.e., the skewer and not the morsels in a shish-kebab). The advocating for such a philosophy has been largely avoided. What is needed are processes which will help us work towards a society inspired by a different world view. We need tactics, yes, but first we need innovative strategies. It is more necessary than ever to pass from a state of critiquing the current system to actual concrete actions. Tactics must be shifted from a defensive position to one that offers positive, proactive choices.
- I find that although you mention the human rights framework, you do not make it central in your critique and recommendations. For example you still variously use stakeholders instead of claimholders. (Stakeholders is original business language. To have or to hold a stake in something is the same as having an interest or holding shares).
- You’re not centering the analysis on the HR framework, I feel underplays the importance of the empowerment and mobilization of claimholders, not to engage in “institutional dialogue”, but rather to demand needed changes from duty bearers. This is what it will take to have “the vested interests tamed”.
- I feel that referring to power relations as a “black box” mystifies the issue and gives the idea we would not know what to do; we do!
- Are you making the necessary distinction between inequity and inequality? The former is a justice concept, the latter a HR concept.
- I dislike your use of “poorer peoples”. These are people rendered poor by an unfair system. Talking about “the poor” brings the kneejerk reaction of poverty alleviation or poverty eradication... when what we need is disparity reduction!

We are critical of, but not private sector bashers. Besides PPPs should you give more prominence to at what is happening with conflicts of interest (CoI), free trade agreement (FTAs), multistakeholder platforms... and what their common denominator is, namely an increasing interference in public decision making?

Participant 4

Overall, I miss the regional perspective (MERCOSUR, ASEAN, ECOWAS, EU) and what would be expected from them in the “eco-social turn”. They certainly have a role to fulfil but they are nowadays especially very economically based. Probably examples about successful cooperation on ecological and social themes in regional integration organizations could add value to the text.

Also it would be very good to add an overview of most important international institutions economically, socially and ecologically and how they differ as regards “hard, legally binding commitments” and relative strength of specialized agencies.

Participant 6

I found Chapter 7, Global Governance and the Politics of Transformative Change, to be particularly strong. A few themes that could be included or adjusted include:

- i. Personal/lived coherence. The report rightly notes the importance of policy coherence. Equally important will be personal coherence, by which espoused theories are actually upheld in personal life. Does the diplomat who campaigns on behalf of sustainability still fly first class? Does the development agency that speaks of respect and solidarity with all people bus its field agents back to the capital city every night, instead of allowing them to sleep in the village where their project partners do? These are the kinds of issues that will need to be addressed if government officials are to be able to sacrifice what is popular to achieve what it needed and good.
- ii. Limits of state sovereignty. The report explores the coherence of governance at the international level. Yet it does not go far enough to take this line of inquiry to its logical conclusion: examining the utility and limitations of the concept of absolute state sovereignty itself. Such an exploration would not be welcomed by many Member States. Yet it is widely recognized that virtually all global challenges transcend political borders. And organization into, and action at the level of, multi-lateral bodies goes only so far to avoid the challenges inherent in addressing global challenges in piecemeal fashion. Until the limits of state sovereignty are explored frankly and fully, truly transformative change at the international level will remain out of reach.
- iii. Drawbacks of “developed/developing” terminology. While the document does a great job articulating the universality of the agenda, that all Member States and communities have work to do, it still utilizes the

outmoded framework of the “developing” and “developed” countries. I recognize that there is a political meaning to developed and developing in this context, however so long as we consider the high-income countries (a more accurate descriptor) to be developed, we are hamstrung in our ability to say that they are, in many cases, underdeveloped in both the social and environmental dimensions of the 2030 Agenda (not to mention the reality that economic poverty exists in the majority of high-income countries as well). In order to be coherent with a triple-bottom-line agenda, we need to label countries according to triple-bottom-line standards: income level, social cohesion, and environmental sustainability. Only when all three are satisfied should a country be called developed. It might be helpful for UNRISD to act as a standard-bearer in this context, just as it is in so many other framings of social development.