

MDGs and SDGs

Lessons Learnt from Global Public Participation in the Drafting of the UN Development Goals

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This article is the English original of the article “MDGs und SDGs: Lehren aus der öffentlichen Beteiligung an der Ausarbeitung der UN-Entwicklungsziele”, published in: **VEREINTE NATIONEN – German Review on the United Nations**, Vol. 62, No. 6, 2014, pp. 251–256.

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The article reviews the development of global public participation within the United Nations development agenda, through a comparison between the negotiation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the negotiation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Whilst great strides have been made in terms of public outreach, significant deficiencies need to be recognised and addressed by the UN coordinating organs, if they are to live up to the self-imposed public participation obligations of the international community.

Introduction

The drafting process of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) has reached its final stage. In July 2014, an Open Working Group (OWG) of the United Nations (UN) produced a first draft of the SDGs, consisting of 17 goals and 169 targets. This draft and other reports will be taken by the UN Secretary-General as input for his synthesis report, which is expected late November 2014. The OWG proposals will remain the basic document for the final negotiations within the UN General Assembly in September 2015 on the adoption of a Post-2015 development agenda. This paper takes a closer look at global public participation in this drafting process and compares it with public participation—or the lack thereof—in the drafting of the predecessor to the SDGs: the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Global public participation in the work of the United Nations can be described as the practice of consulting and involving the world’s citizens, especially those substantially interested and affected, in UN policy-forming activities. The identification of Millennium Development Goals and the follow-on Sustainable Development Goals are referred here as examples of such policy-forming activities.

Before we look at global public participation in the determination of goals, it is perhaps useful to explain more specifically what this article is about, and what it is *not* about. In short, we look for direct participation, by the world’s citizens or sub-groups thereof, in UN

policy-forming relating to affairs that affect the interests of those citizens. This differs from a general analysis of the role of NGOs, corporations, or other non-State actors. Global public participation can also be differentiated from *indirect* public participation in UN affairs, *i.e.* through the Member States. Let us look to each process in turn, before drawing conclusions through comparison.

How the MDGs Came Into Being

We can be relatively brief about the drafting of the Millennium Development Goals, because these goals did not result from inclusive and participatory processes at all. As Scott Wisor highlighted, “only a few key civil servants and development experts [were] involved in the process.”¹

Looking to the MDGs, in 2000 the UN General Assembly (UNGA) adopted the Millennium Declaration.² Most people think that it contains the MDGs and was the culmination of a global effort to identify a limited set of measurable goals and indicators to guide international development policies for 2000–2015.

That is not how the MDGs came into being at all. The drafting and adopting of MDGs was not neat and organized, but chaotic and full of disagreements and difficult compromises. Most importantly, the Millennium Declaration does not contain a set of goals; it actually took creative reading and tough negotiating to subsequently extract eight MDGs from the Declaration.

Let us begin with the process through which the goals were set, and focus on global public participation—or lack thereof—in this process.³ The story begins in the early 1990s, with world conferences on global challenges organized under the auspices of the UN.⁴ There were a lot of them: 12 over 6 years.⁵ Many resulted in brief outcome documents or declarations, listing a few priority areas and challenges with general policies to tackle them. Some had enormous influence over the development of international law and policy-making, such as the Declaration on Environment and Development (Rio de Janeiro, 1992) and the Vienna Declaration of the World Conference on Human Rights (1993). This long series of global summits demonstrated that it was possible to reach global agreements, and collectively define grand challenges with a limited set of commitments to tackle them.

¹ Scott Wisor, ‘After the MDGs: Citizen Deliberation and the Post-2015 Development Framework’, 26:1 Ethics & International Affairs, 2012, p. 123, p. 120. See also pp. 115-116, and pp. 119-120.

² UN General Assembly (UNGA), United Nations Millennium Declaration, UN Doc. A/RES/55/2.

³ See David Hulme, ‘The Making of the Millennium Development Goals: Human Development Meets Results based Management in an Imperfect World,’ Brooks World Poverty Institute Working Paper 16, 2007; David Hulme, ‘The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs): A Short History of the World’s Biggest Promise,’ Brook World Poverty Institute Working Paper 100, September 2009.

⁴ David Hulme, ‘The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs): A Short History of the World’s Biggest Promise,’ pp. 9-10.

⁵ See, The United Nations Development Agenda: Development for All (Goals, commitments and strategies agreed at the United Nations world conferences and summits since 1990), Published by UNDESA in 2007, and available online: http://www.un.org/esa/devagenda/UNDA_BW5_Final.pdf, esp. pp. 83-85.

The World Summit for Social Development (Copenhagen, 1995) was perhaps most influential on the MDGs.⁶ The resulting Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development identified ten “commitments”, *inter alia* relating to creating an enabling environment for social development, eradicating poverty, promoting full employment, social integration and human rights protection. The Declaration was explicit about the need to adopt international development goals focussing on meeting basic needs and eradicating poverty.

The idea to summarize these commitments, in combination with all other global summits, through a limited set of development goals came from the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).⁷ This group comprised around twenty (now almost thirty) rich States, known for having generous international development assistance policies. Being an OECD committee, DAC is not part of the UN system, and it cannot claim to speak on behalf of the UN’s entire membership. Participation is limited to its own richest State membership.

But even among those twenty-something representatives, only a few participated enthusiastically in the process of summarizing the summit outcomes into a simple set of goals. David Hulme convincingly shows that it was thanks to a very small group of individuals that the DAC staff began to study all the outcome documents of the global summits of the 1990s in an attempt to rephrase them into one coherent list of commitments, goals, or targets.⁸ This resulted in a booklet, entitled *Shaping the 21st Century: The Contribution of Development Co-operation* (1996), in which such goals were identified.⁹ If one compares this list with the MDGs, the resemblance is remarkable. The booklet aimed to select “a limited number of indicators of success by which our efforts can be judged”; the challenge being agreed “ambitious but realisable goals.”

At the time of publication (1996) these goals were embraced by some, but ignored by most others within the international community, OECD and DAC. It clearly did not inspire or motivate the entire world. Despite the fact that these goals were extracted from UN summit outcome documents, the UN itself was hesitant in adopting them, given DAC only represents its membership of twenty-something developed States. This origin would not make it easier to ensure universal adoption and acceptance.

The latter 1990s brought about preparation for the summit-of-all-summits: the Millennium Summit. The ambition of drafting a brief Millennium Declaration was made public at an early stage, and the UN Secretariat invited various input—NGOs, States, the business

⁶ World Summit for Social Development, held at Copenhagen, Denmark, between 6 and 12 March 1995, Report published as UN Document A/CONF.166/9, issued 19 April 1995.

⁷ David Hulme, ‘The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs): A Short History of the World’s Biggest Promise,’ pp. 12-18.

⁸ David Hulme, ‘The Making of the Millennium Development Goals: Human Development Meets Results based Management in an Imperfect World,’ pp. 5-7; and David Hulme, ‘The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs): A Short History of the World’s Biggest Promise,’ esp. p. 14.

⁹ Development Assistance Committee (DAC), *Shaping the 21st Century: The Contribution of Development Co-operation*, published by OECD in May 1996.

community, social movements, etc.—on what to include. A few months before the summit, *We the Peoples: the Role of the United Nations in the 21st Century* was published.¹⁰ Whilst published under Secretary-General Kofi Annan’s name, it is no secret that John Ruggie had a big influence in the drafting.¹¹ The final chapter was formulated as a first proposal for the Millennium Declaration text, containing a list of global values and priorities.

Some priorities, especially those under the heading “freedom from want,” were clearly inspired by the goals identified by DAC in 1996. There were additional “priorities”, not mentioned by DAC, whilst other goals listed by DAC were not included. Thus essentially two competing lists emerged: the short and concise by DAC, and the lengthy and comprehensive by Annan.

Two months after *We, the Peoples* was published, the OECD, UN, IMF and World Bank issued a joint publication, to show that they were all united in their effort of identifying a list of goals.¹² This joint report listed a set of “international development goals”, almost identical to those proposed by DAC (1996), and very different from those proposed by Annan (2000).¹³

The Millennium Declaration was adopted on 8th September 2000. David Hulme convincingly shows how the drafting process attempted to please both the rich countries –insisting on their DAC prepared list of International Development Goals—and everybody else, i.e. other States of the world, NGOs, and so on.¹⁴

Most of what later became the MDGs were within Chapter III of the Millennium Declaration on development and poverty eradication.

Eight such goals were extracted¹⁵:

- To eradicate extreme poverty and hunger,
- To achieve universal primary education,
- To promote gender equality and the empowerment of women,
- To reduce child mortality,
- To improve maternal health,
- To combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases,

¹⁰ UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, *We the Peoples: the Role of the United Nations in the 21st Century*, April 2000.

¹¹ See also David Hulme, ‘The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs): A Short History of the World’s Biggest Promise,’ p. 26.

¹² International Monetary Fund, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, United Nations, and the World Bank Group, 2000: *A Better World for All* (Progress towards the international development goals), issued in June 2000, and available at www.paris21.org/betterworld. See also David Hulme, ‘The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs): A Short History of the World’s Biggest Promise,’ p. 32.

¹³ *Ibid*, p.5.

¹⁴ See both David Hulme, ‘The Making of the Millennium Development Goals: Human Development Meets Results based Management in an Imperfect World,’ and David Hulme, ‘The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs): A Short History of the World’s Biggest Promise.’

¹⁵ Millennium Declaration, Op. cit.

- To ensure environmental sustainability,
- To develop a global partnership for development.

But the Declaration contained many more resolutions—they were not called goals—on peace and security, human rights, good governance, UN reform, protection of the environment, and many more on international development cooperation, all of which were ignored in the MDG-process.

It is important to emphasize that the extraction of the MDGs from the Millennium Declaration was again done by a relatively small working group.¹⁶ The rich continued to insist on their International Development Goals. As is clear from comparing the list of DAC-goals and the MDGs, the latter are more derived from the work of DAC than the Millennium Declaration. It is thus helpful that the MDGs were subsequently embraced as a road map for the future by the full membership of the UNGA.¹⁷

What to conclude about global public participation in the MDG-process? In an official DAC-publication, the story is summarized:

“In September 2000, heads of state and government adopted the Millennium Declaration and the MDGs, based largely on the formulation recommended in *Shaping the 21st Century and A Better World for All*. The Goals thus evolved from being disparate findings in various UN conferences to becoming a unified set of DAC recommendations to the international community, and then to acquiring recognition as a universally-agreed vision to guide international co-operation.”¹⁸

The DAC admits, with a considerable sense of pride, that it was itself essentially the MDGs author. This is despite many efforts, from NGOs, interest groups, Third World States, international corporations, etc., to influence the debate within the UN between the publication of *We, the Peoples* and the adoption of the Millennium Declaration.¹⁹

The MDGs drafting history discussed is reflected in its content, both in a positive and negative way. The goals were limited in number and very specific, with many defined in measurable figures or percentages, and bound by time.²⁰ With more participants, it would undoubtedly have been much harder to agree on such a limited set of goals—excluding many topical issues—and with such specificity. The specificity is a good thing, making it

¹⁶ See also Road Map towards the Implementation of the United Nations Millennium Declaration, Report of the Secretary-General, UN Doc. A/56/326, distributed 6 September 2001, paras. 80-163.

¹⁷ Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit, UN General Assembly resolution 56/95, adopted 14 December 2001.

¹⁸ OECD, DAC in Dates: The History of OECD’s Development Assistance Committee, 2006 Edition, p. 50, available at <http://www.oecd.org/dac/1896808.pdf>.

¹⁹ See also David Hulme, ‘The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs): A Short History of the World’s Biggest Promise’, p. 33.

²⁰ According to Alston, these three characteristics made them different from all earlier UNGA commitments. See Philip Alston, ‘Ships Passing in the Night: The Current State of the Human Rights and Development Debate Seen through the Lens of the Millennium Development Goals,’ *Human Rights Quarterly*, Vol. 27, 2005, p. 756.

relatively easy to test whether the Goals will be met by the end of 2015. The statistics simply have to be compared with those of 1990.²¹

But as one looks closer, problems arise.²² The MDGs were rather vague on allocating responsibilities. Only the principle of shared responsibility addressed this matter, with “the nations of the world” jointly responsible. Does that mean the world as a whole is responsible for achieving the MDGs? Easterly rightly pointed out, “if all of us are collectively responsible for a big world goal, then no single agency or politician is held accountable if the goal is not met.”²³

Furthermore the relationship with international law was unclear. References to international law of course help stimulate compliance. The language of the Millennium Declaration and the MDGs derived therefrom is very much focused on individual entitlements, so a reference to human rights might have been obvious. But no MDG is formulated in human rights terms.²⁴ At the same time, the importance of this missed opportunity should not be exaggerated. Clearly, the MDGs and human rights commitments are at least implicitly linked.²⁵ So this deficiency could be remedied to some extent after the goals adoption.

With the successes of MDGs has come the strong desire to develop more ambitious follow-ups, and the coupled interest of participation. Equally, the failures of the MDGs have led to calls for greater participation, in an effort to remedy, and importantly, not repeat the mistakes. But how has UN public participation evolved to meet this need?

Civil Society Participation in the SDGs

“The opportunity to rethink and redefine our global development pathway comes once in a generation. This is our opportunity and we must seize it.”²⁶ This captures how important civil society’s participation within *defining* SDGs is to those involved—at least from the NGOs’ perspective.²⁷ Such opportunities only occur when, unlike the MDGs, actors are involved in goal-setting. The UN institutions themselves appear equally assertive in their reaching out for participation of *all* stakeholders, through a host of engagement methods

²¹ However some MDGs still allow room for fundamentally different interpretations. See also Michael A. Clemens, Charles J. Kenny & Todd J. Moss, ‘Millennium Development Goals, Aid Targets, and the Costs of Over-Expectations,’ *Sustainable Development Law & Policy*, Vol. 6, 2005, p. 58 and pp. 59-60; and Jan Vandemoortele, ‘Are the MDGs Feasible?’, *Development Policy Journal*, Vol. 3, 2003, pp. 10-13. And see the annually published Millennium Development Goals Reports, by the United Nations Department of Public Information, available at <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/>.

²² Jan Vandemoortele, ‘Are the MDGs Feasible?’, pp. 10-13.

²³ William Easterly, ‘The Utopian Nightmare,’ *Foreign Policy*, September/October, 2005, p. 61.

²⁴ Philip Alston, ‘Ships Passing in the Night’ (2005), p. 757.

²⁵ See especially Philip Alston, ‘Ships Passing in the Night’ (2005), and Alston, ‘A Human Rights Perspective on the Millennium Development Goals,’ paper written in 2004, as advice for the Millennium Project Task Force on Poverty and Economic Development.

²⁶ Beyond2015, Beyond 2015 reaction to the Open Working Group’s ‘Focus Areas Document’, March 2014, beyond2015.org.

²⁷ An important, but not all-encompassing, part of civil society.

and technologies.²⁸ Given the multitude of workstreams contributing to the SDGs prior to intergovernmental negotiations (beginning September 2014), we cannot provide a comprehensive review but rather focus on a few key issues highlighting how inclusive participation has evolved, but ultimately leaves much to be desired substantively.²⁹

Briefly summarised opportunities for public participation beyond stand-alone conferences and stock-taking events fall into three categories:

- The UN Secretary-General led initiatives, including the High Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda (HLP), the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN), and the UN Global Compact (UNGC). Whilst it is important to remember civil society was given the opportunity to contribute to the SDSN and UNGC, their primary focus is not civil society (science/technological community and private sector respectively). Our comments thus largely focus on the HLP and workstreams below.³⁰
- The intergovernmental Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals (OWG), which drafted proposed SDGs (mandated by Rio+20).³¹
- The United Nations Development Group (UNDG) led the so-called “Global Conversation” which provided input into all the above.³² It has since expanded to provide implementation consultations for the upcoming interstate negotiations.³³

We shall focus on invitation, input methods and participation to see what broad lessons can be learnt from global public participation to date. Whilst unjust to expect such global initiatives to be equivalent to national participation, the SDGs importance and self-imposed UN expectations, require the public holding participation claims to a high meaningfulness test.

In terms of invitation, proposal drafting to-date has taken on the obligations of inclusion mentioned.³⁴ For example *WorldWeWant2015.org* provides an online platform for various elements of multiple global, national and thematic public consultations, with the ambition it “will gather the priorities of people from every corner of the world and help build a collective vision that will be used directly by the United Nations and World Leaders to plan a

²⁸ UNGA, The future we want, UN Doc. A/RES/66/288, paras. 42-53, 248.

²⁹ See in-depth articles by the authors: Otto Spijkers and Arron Honniball, ‘Developing Global Public Participation (1): Global Public Participation at the United Nations,’ and ‘Developing Global Public Participation (2): Shaping the Sustainable Development Goals,’ *International Community Law Review*, No. 3, 2015 (forthcoming).

³⁰ For contributing reports see, HLP (post2015hlp.org); SDSN (<http://unsdsn.org/resources/publications/action-agenda-for-sustainable-development/>) and (<http://unsdsn.org/resources/publications/indicators/>); UNGC (unglobalcompact.org).

³¹ OWG, Outcome Document, July 2014, <http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/focussdgs.html>.

³² See overview: UNDG, A Million Voices: The World We Want, September 2013; The Global Conversation Begins, March 2013, undp.org.

³³ UNDP, Post-2015: the global conversation continues with new dialogues in 50 countries, March 2014, undp.org.

³⁴ UNGA, The future we want, UN Doc. A/RES/66/288, paras. 42-53, 248.

new development agenda launching in 2015, one that is based on the aspirations of all citizens!”³⁵

The breadth of different audiences allows invitation of various fragments of civil society. As global goals, to be implemented at the national level, representation is required across both the global (e.g. people, thematic communities,³⁶ regions,³⁷ sub-regions and nations³⁸) and national (e.g. youth, NGOs, workers and experts) level—which the consultations have in some way tried to capture.

However, meaningful participation and efficient resource use require targeted invitations to relevant participants. For general agenda setting consultations such as the *MyWorld* survey, aimed at broadly defining global public priorities, specification beyond people is unnecessary. Yet, consultations seeking stakeholders of country X must define and target said stakeholders. Mixed results exist across consultations, but numerous global and national consultations raised difficulties of ill-defined relevant stakeholders, excluded recognised stakeholders³⁹ or suffered inequalities of access.⁴⁰ What’s more, inclusivity efforts in participation initiatives says nothing about influential lobbying, which remains the reserve of those with New York representation.⁴¹

Civil society’s participation is dependent on an awareness, and means, of providing input. Whilst invitations to participate demonstrated ambition, the methods of raising awareness and collecting public input displayed a willingness for technological experimentation. The consultations demonstrate outreach through television, radio, newspapers, online advertisements, webcasts, blogs, press releases, YouTube, email, face-to-face surveying and the use of local networks and moderators.⁴²

This variety in outreach was continued into methods of collection, with dedicated websites⁴³, social media outlets⁴⁴, individual interviews, group workshops, paper MyWorld

³⁵ About, worldwewant2015.org/post2015-about.

³⁶ 11 thematic topics: conflict, violence and disaster; education; energy; environmental sustainability; food security and nutrition; governance; growth and employment; health; addressing inequalities; population dynamics; water.

³⁷ UN Regional Commissions, Post-2015 Process and the Sustainable Development Goals: Engagement of the Regional Commissions, January 2013, <http://www.regionalcommissions.org/RCSandPost2015.pdf>.

³⁸ 88 national consultations. UNDG, A Million Voices: The World We Want, September 2013; The Global Conversation Begins, March 2013, p.43, undp.org.

³⁹ E.g. despite UNDG recommendations as relevant stakeholders, and recognition as at risk in Serbia, Serbia’s extensive targeting did not include the LGBT community. UN in Serbia, The Serbia We Want: Annex 1 Detailed Report, worldwewant2015.org.

⁴⁰ Beyond those technologically disadvantaged (e.g. internet intensive initiatives), there was also a failure to address youth diversity when inviting input; Sonia Preisser, ‘Youth Perspectives on the Post-2015 Development Agenda’, <http://www.wfuna.org/post-2015-youth-perspectives>. A conclusion also recognisable in relation to HLP outreach events: UN-NGLS, UN-NGLS Civil Society Consultation for the High-level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda: December 2012-January 2013, p. 1, <http://www.un-ngls.org>.

⁴¹ Yojana Sharma, Last-minute UNESCO lobbying brings SDG science success, July 2014, scidev.net.

⁴² Serbia providing another good example: UN in Serbia, The Serbia We Want: Annex 1 Detailed Report, pp. 27-38, worldwewant2015.org.

⁴³ Principally accessible; worldwewant2015.org.

ballots⁴⁵, mobile phone surveys, photography competitions⁴⁶, roundtables and other surveys, from open questions to multi-choice selections. The Global Conversation workstream has been most notable in terms of outreach experimentation (when compared to the more traditional discussion events methodology of other workstreams), and its results were submitted to both the OWG and HLP alongside the direct submissions of civil society organisations.⁴⁷ If one was to compare the HLP and OWG process, it is noticeable that HLP outreach events surrounding each meeting were more accessible given their geographical spread compared to the exclusively UN Headquarters focused OWG. Civil society also had the possibility of sitting directly on the HLP, and thus a great deal of drafting influence—an input option not available in the exclusively State membership OWG.

However whilst commendable as the largest public consultations seen to date, the response and representation of civil society suffers from a significant deficit across the board.⁴⁸ It is unclear whether this is due to a lack of information, access, and desire, or due to scepticism on the part of potential participants. Nevertheless, the poor response and depth of participation has long been ignored or side-lined; with outcome documents stating civil society *has* been represented without recognition of the participation deficits, or suggested improvements for the future. This low participation turnout is further exacerbated when the modalities of participation are unclear, or what the substantive influence or outcome of participating remain undefined.⁴⁹ This overemphasis of representation is further evident in NGO submissions, which utilise the results to emphasise their agenda.

Nevertheless, the SDGs process has begun to recognise the disparity between participation expectation and actual participation. This can be seen in the recent report on Portuguese consultations over localising SDGs as part of the 2nd phase of the Global Conversation. The report recognised only 60 participants attended the 6 workshops, half of those who registered, and recognised the lack of response by organisations contacted - with some

⁴⁴ Including Twitter and Facebook e.g. water thematic consultations input via [facebook.com/waterpost2015](https://www.facebook.com/waterpost2015) or HLP input, twitter #Post2015HLP.

⁴⁵ <http://www.myworld2015.org/?page=how-it-works>.

⁴⁶ WorldWeWant2015, Outreach Report, Consultation on Environmental Sustainability in the Post-2015 Development Agenda, p. 4, worldwewant2015.org.

⁴⁷ For Global Conversation and direct submissions, see HLP (<http://www.post2015hlp.org/outreach/>), and OWG (<http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?menu=1528>). The Global Consultation results are also said to have been submitted directly to the UN Secretary-General and eventually to member states during the negotiations.

⁴⁸ E.g. WorldWeWant2015, described as the “aspirations of every citizen”, only had 50,000 users by March 2013 (0.0007% global population), UNDP, The Global Conversation Begins, March 2013, p. 9, undp.org. Of which only 4,677 contributed according to <http://trends.worldwewant2015.org/discover/#mode=type>.

⁴⁹ The OWG got off to a rocky start in terms of participation, given States were still debating what the OWG should actually produce, see recorded debate: IISD Reporting Services, ‘Summary of the First Session of the UN General Assembly Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals: 14-15 March 2013,’ Earth Negotiations Bulletin, Vol. 32, No 1, March 2013. Now we have the outcome document it still remains unclear—the SDGs proposed seem to cover everything, i.e. an ‘all things to all people’ approach, demonstrating a commitment to ambitious proposals, but no agreement on what this energy should target; Charles Kenny and Casey Dunning, ‘What’s the Point of the Post-2015 Development Agenda?’, August 2014, <http://www.cgdev.org/>.

preliminary thoughts as to why.⁵⁰ Whilst a welcome development, the problem may have been identified too late for increasing participation in setting the SDGs, but could address participation barriers and noninterest in implementation consultations.

Conclusion

Thus, the SDGs process represents the true birth of global public participation in setting the UN development agenda; with goals providing the foundations guiding intergovernmental, and hopefully governmental agendas. As identified above, deficiencies exist in the outreach efforts, and as highlighted in our forthcoming articles deficiencies continue when evaluating participation's effectiveness.⁵¹ But let us remember, this is a previously unseen experiment, and a vast improvement on the MDGs process. Can we expect this to be a short-lived experiment of the day, or the start of a growing trend? Let us conclude with a look to the future, which promises continued evolution.

The future of global public participation may move beyond invitation (and its deficiencies), to one based on collecting passive information of the global public. UN Global Pulse is currently experimenting with 'mining' publically available data, such as Twitter 'tweets' to identify priorities and interests of the people.⁵² Whilst initially focused only on English, and limited keywords, it has expanded to French, Spanish and Portuguese, with more keywords "to generate actionable insights for policy-makers".⁵³ Whilst concerns of privacy and the digital divide exist, such data is increasing available, including, with the spread of mobile technology, from developing States. Real time collection holds the possibility of highlighting issues missed by traditional participation tools, and avoids the up to 5 year information gap afflicting data collection across development fields.⁵⁴ It still remains to be seen whether such data really demonstrates the *long-term* public concerns—especially given SDGs are to set global priorities until 2030. Furthermore, inclusivity beyond Twitter users will be a crucial issue to address, and suggest the ultimately *supplementary* role such big data can provide.

⁵⁰ UNDG, Public Consultation on the Localization of the Post-2015 Global Development Agenda in Portugal, August 2014, pp. 6-7.

⁵¹ See Otto Spijkers and Arron Honniball, 'Developing Global Public Participation (1): Global Public Participation at the United Nations,' and 'Developing Global Public Participation (2): Shaping the Sustainable Development Goals,' *International Community Law Review*, No. 3, 2015 (forthcoming).

⁵² <http://post2015.unglobalpulse.net/>

⁵³ UN Global Pulse, *Big Data for Development: A Primer*, June 2013, p.1.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*