

Chapter 18

The SDG18 and the Two Cultural Purposes at Large: Towards a New Pillar of Sustainability?



**Paulo Castro Seixas, Ricardo Cunha Dias, Nadine Lobner,
and Diogo Guedes Vidal**

Abstract In the past 6 years that have followed the initial launch of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), a discussion on its extension (SDG + 1/SDG18) emerged. The SDG18 quest is interpreted as a collective pursuit for meaning on SDGs and the future of our planet, based on 23 different proposals. This article aims at a detailed analysis of these 23 proposals and their meanings within the SDGs framework which directly connects with urban trends and transitions. Methodologically, this paper is supported by online research on SDG18 proposals and a content analysis. This leads to three main categories based on the criteria of aims/claims for the SDG18: (1) country ownership as national interest; (2) societal cooperation as both a fear and an emphasis of the SDG framework and (3) cultural purposes. Throughout our analysis, the latter category resonates with the core dyads of humanity: nomadic–sedentary and rural–urban. The category was divided in two subcategories: an Anthropoc Techno-explosion Purpose (a nomadic-urban-progress trend) and an Ecologic Consciousness Purpose (a sedentary-rurban-degrowth trend).

P. C. Seixas · R. C. Dias · N. Lobner (✉)
Institute of Social and Political Sciences (ISCSP), University of Lisboa, Lisbon, Portugal
e-mail: lobnernadine0@gmail.com

P. C. Seixas
e-mail: pseixas@iscsp.ulisboa.pt

D. G. Vidal
Centre for Functional Ecology – Science for People and the Planet (CFE), TERRA Associate
Laboratory, Department of Life Sciences, University of Coimbra, Coimbra, Portugal

Department of Social Sciences and Management, Universidade Aberta, Lisbon, Portugal

D. G. Vidal
e-mail: diogo.vidal@uc.pt

P. C. Seixas · N. Lobner
Research Center for Anthropology and Health (CIAS), University of Coimbra, Coimbra, Portugal

N. Lobner
FCT (Grant Number 2020.07467.BD), Foundation for Science and Technology, Lisbon, Portugal

These are what we describe as the two Purposes at Large, framing the dialogue about our future as human beings. Finally, assuming the relevance of this dialogue, we urge the General Secretary of the UN to create an annually SDG18 Forum.

Keywords SDG18 · Cultural purposes · Dyads of humanity · Diatopical hermeneutics · Planetary future

Introduction

Is the twenty-first century recapturing nomadic and sedentary, as well as urban and rural structures in a new sociospatial configuration? Are, somehow, the SDG a socialization agenda for this new context of life? This article presents a broad discussion on the SDG framework, focused on the establishment of the SDG18; and opportunities for inevitable change at large for humanity.

The SDGs Agenda defined by the United nations (2015) was released in September 2015 with 17 goals and 169 targets to be implemented in three tiers: a global transformation, a national one and a subnational one. Notwithstanding, in the last years there has been an ongoing debate and propositions on the SDG + 1 or SDG18.

The aim of this paper was to collect and present the SDG18 propositions, its categorizations, and meanings. The motivations to create a new SDG are diverse: on one side, emerging from general human discontent; an agenda for promoting marginal visions; on the other side, aiming at a higher purpose on our collective pursuit that crosscuts the dyads of humanity (nomadic–sedentary and rural–urban). In any case, the SDGs framework should by no means be understood as a closed agenda (Hummels 2018; Poole 2018; Visseren-Hamakers 2020). We need to remain open-minded enough to embrace the monitorization and discussion about the agenda as a fluid and ongoing participatory process with continuous transformations (Pradhan et al. 2017; Fraisl et al. 2020; Veland et al. 2021). The 18th SDG may well be an expression of that process, opening up to a set of questions: could the SDG18 aim at inserting a missing issue within the agenda? Are the proposals on SDG18 a result from new challenges in order to prevent growing fears or take advantage from new opportunities? At least, the SDG18 discussion offers an opportunity for an overview and an evaluation of the current SDG framework. Hence, we argue that an analysis of the existing proposals is mandatory for this exploration.

The research presented in this paper identified 23 different SDG18 proposals. At first sight these SDG18 proposals seem arbitrary and conjectural—so far that anything could be possible. Hence, any attempts of scientific classification may appear useless. At the same time a relevant issue arises: by proposing an SDG18, people and organizations are interested in the SDGs while considering that something is missing (Hummels 2018; Poole 2018; Visseren-Hamakers 2020).

The SDG18 experience seems to be a strive to access and assess the meaning of the SDGs. Therefore, we propose that the SDG18 could be interpreted as a collective quest for meaning. Without a sense for the future and a meaning towards our planetary

path (Veland et al. 2021), we lack enough motivation to build Transformational Communities (Seixas and Lobner 2018) for the Transformational Wave (Seixas and Lobner 2021) that we are involved in. A possible interpretation of the emergence of these proposals is the human need for meaning, a destiny for the humankind. And if this is the case, we propose that ‘purpose’ should be considered as a relevant dimension of analysis. Therefore, focusing on the analysis of the 18th SDG proposals, we claim that a Cultural Purposes at Large should be explored. Furthermore, we suggest that the Cultural Purposes constitute a 5th pillar of sustainability and, as will be explored in a later stage of this paper, that these are a reinterpretation of the dyads of humanity.

For decades, sustainability had just three pillars (environmental, social and economic) (Dias et al. 2020). Yet, the growing concerns about and debates on the Millennium Goals and the SDGs revealed the need for a fourth pillar of sustainability: governance (Seixas 2014). In this long-lasting discussion, one thing led to other, starting with the proposal of ‘culture’ as a relevant transition trigger towards sustainability. Yet, changing culture implies to activate change in education what entails transforming science and technology (Mori 2014). As a consequence, this required a new ethical foundation and eventually a normative framework. The SDG agenda, which became this normative framework, established peace and security and, finally, a new governance as part of the ethical and transdisciplinary foundation, incorporating both top-down and bottom-up efforts to create synergic drivers between SDGs (Takeuchi et al. 2017; Alcamo et al. 2020). Hence, as governance became what is conceived as the 4th pillar of sustainability, it is to be seen as innovative adaptation to the continuous challenges of the Anthropocene as a resilient eco-socio-system (Seixas 2014; Dearing et al. 2015; Berkes 2017).

Even though this 4th pillar is not enough, it opened up to an implementation of sustainability as a Transformational Plan (the SDGs), establishing ‘learning communities of practices’ which could replicate ‘Transformational Plans’ everywhere (Seixas and Lobner 2018; Cortegano et al. 2021). It remains unclear if the 17 SDGs or the 5 p’s (prosperity, partnership, peace, planet and people) accomplish a cultural purpose at large. SDGs leadership and the governance of/for sustainability and resilience lack an enthusiastic vision for our future (Boone et al. 2020). In that sense, we question: Is Earth a ‘living being’ (Mother Earth Rights 2010) with which we have to cooperate and find a sustainable and resilient compromise; or, is it, instead, a ‘big spaceship’ that has to be driven with care (Henley 2018)? Could Earth be both? These metaphors refer to a society guided by the relocation of conviviality, or a society driven by technology in a serendipitous way. Hence, a 5th pillar of sustainability may well be required for understanding the future of Earth. Focusing on the 18th SDG proposals, we claim that the Cultural Purposes at Large constitute the 5th pillar of sustainability.

This paper is structured in the following way: first, we will present the methods and procedures of the research. Following, we will explore the SDG18 proposals gathered through online research. Thereafter, we will highlight the content analysis with three main categories (country ownership; societal cooperation and cultural purposes). Finally, we will discuss the results through “diatopic hermeneutics”,

emphasizing how the two Cultural Purposes are a reinterpretation of the long-term dyads of humanity (nomadic–sedentary, rural–urban). In the conclusion we will open up for a debate about the Cultural Purposes at Large as a 5th pillar of sustainability.

Materials and Methods

We have undertaken online research through an inductive approach on the universe of SDG18 propositions. A systematic research was made, using “SDG + 1”, “SDG18” and “18th SDG” as keywords. This resulted in 23 proposals which, thereafter, have been explored through a content analysis (Bardin 2011). In the course of the inductive thematic aggregation, the content analysis highlighted a typology, built on ‘aim’ or ‘claim’ as a criterion, resulting in three main categories: Country Ownership (specific aims of particular countries); Societal Cooperation (cooperation aims amongst countries) and Cultural Purposes (planetary aims at large). These main categories further included subcategories.

The particular case of the latter category (Cultural Purposes) includes two rather different ‘Purposes’. This created an opportunity for a theoretical exploration on the meanings of the SDG18 beyond a strict empirical categorization. To respond to this theoretical challenge and shed light on that duality, ‘diatopic hermeneutics’ has been applied as a way of thinking and interpreting that particular category. In course of this we have constructed ‘Cultural Purposes at Large’ as a potential scientific concept that urges us to understand the recapturing of the dyads of humanity that currently are in process.

‘Diatopic hermeneutics’ is a multidisciplinary approach emerging in Theology (Panikkar 1975; Panikkar and Panikkar 1982; Mignolo and Schiwy 2003; Schneider 2018; Schulz 2021), Sociology (Santos 1997) and Education (Barrantes Montero 2017). This approach focusses on making bridges and mutual understandings among different cultures. The main demarche implies to select homeomorphic elements in different cultures which may enhance cultural translations. These homeomorphic elements are particular *topoi* (themes/functions) which reveal differences and, simultaneously, connections, i.e. a possibility of a dialogue among cultures. In the process of our analysis, we reached different paths for the humanity, identifying two world-views and possible futures. Diatopic hermeneutics allowed to interpret these findings as two Cultural Purposes at Large which, as such, should be considered for a relevant and continuous dialogue. In the next two sections we will present the analysis and its outputs.

Proposals on the 18th SDG: A Descriptive Overview

Since 2016, a number of voices urge for an SDG 18. Curiously enough, there are very different proposals prevailing. The SDG Agenda is a multilevel framework with an international policy, as well as a national and subnational one. At a national level, usually countries choose to prioritize some SDG, but there are also proposals for a new national SDG. This is the case with ‘SDG 18: Lives safe from UXO’ (Byrne 2020; Volontaires ONU 2020), launched by the Prime Minister Thongloun Sisoulith and former UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon during the ASEAN Summit in Vientiane in September 2016 (Parameswaran 2017). ‘Lives safe from UXO’ is a Lao PDR’s unique national goal aimed at combating the extreme challenge of dealing with millions of Unexploded Ordnance (UXO) littered across the country. A similar SDG was created by Cambodia, “Cambodia mine/ERW free” (Cambodia 2020). As it is referred in the 2020 report on ‘Progressing National SDGs Implementation’, “Bosnia and Herzegovina also included an SDG 18 to be mine free by 2030” (Kindornay and Gendron 2020). Still emphasizing national SDG, yet, within a multinational state and in a very different direction, the University of the Basque Country (UPV/EHU) created a 2030 plan in which ‘Basque culture and plurilingual capacitation’ is proposed as the 18th SDG (de Cámara et al. 2021).

There are also proposals for the SDG18 which focus on the necessary cooperation between differences. Günther Bachmann, Secretary General of the German Council for Sustainable Development, presented a talk on 18th SDG referring that ‘Trans-governance and Empathy’ are the SDG gaps” (Bachmann 2016, p. 9). In 2018, a Vice-president of the Human Rights subcommittee in the European Parliament proposed the SDG18 as an agreement on ‘Cooperation in Good Faith and Common Standards’ (Becerra 2018) as sort of a preventive diplomacy regarding the increase of populism and illiberal trends. Ilona Kickbusch et al. (2015, p. 1069) called for recognizing ‘Global Health Security’ as SDG18, considering that societal cooperation on epidemic diseases were not safeguarded in a post-2015 development agenda.

There are also proposals with more practical concerns on dissemination. In 2019, Marcelo Douek, CEO of Social Docs proposed ‘Communicate your Cause’ as a possible SDG18, basically as a way to disseminate good practices (Douek and Grazinoli 2019). Following the same motto, the newspaper *El Ágora–Diário del Agua* presented the claim of the 5th anniversary launch of the SDG: ‘Responsible Communication’ as the SDG 18 (Cáceres 2020). Similarly, a working paper from the University of Lincoln proposed ‘Visual Sustainability’ (Kock and Carta 2020) in order to emphasize visual communication. Another proposal referred to the SDG18 as ‘Using the Power of Communications, Media and Activism’ (Minney 2019) for promoting all the SDGs. All these proposals seem to emphasize the relevance of SDGs and its more efficient implementation through better communication dynamics.

However, there are other proposals which go further than that. Alain Devigne (2019) proposed ‘The Evolution of Consciousness’ as the very first SDG to become the support for all the other goals. This was proposed in a conference with the title “The Elevation of Consciousness Through Meditation for Global Harmony”

in August 2019, at the Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore. In the same trend, David Nabarro, former special advisor for three Secretary-General of the United Nations and Strategic Director of 4SD (skills, systems and synergies for sustainable development) proposed ‘re-imagining the future’ of our world through ‘Love and Joy’ as the SDG18 (Nabarro 2019). Kristen Ali Eglinton proposed ‘Self Awareness and Personal Agency’ as the SDG18. Linking to this, Sande Hart (2020) presented potential tools for its implementation. Alexandria Poole (2018) suggested ‘Biocultural Heritage’ as SDG18, focusing on local biocultural anchorage and LEK/TEK (Local/Traditional Ecological knowledge). In 2019, in Peru, the Association for Children and their Environment (ania 2019) adopted ‘Active Empathy for Life’ (EAV) as SDG18. Furthermore, Visseren-Hamakers (2020) urged ‘Animal Health, Welfare and Rights’ to become the SDG18.

In an eventual different trend, as we consider in Sect. 18.3 in a more elaborated way, in March 2018, Harry Hummels (2018), a professor from Utrecht University proposed ‘Social Entrepreneurship in a global Society’. In 2020, MindFuture, an art-based foundation and community located in Copenhagen, Denmark, suggested ‘Life with Artificial’ as the SDG18, focusing on prosthetics, biotech and artificial intelligence. Within the same avenue, non-Governmental organizations presented ‘Sustainable Automation’ as the 18th Goal, at the ECOSOC of the UN in July 2020. ‘Ensuring the Digital Age Supports People and Planet’ as the SDG18 was claimed by Amy Luers in 2020, Executive Director of Future Earth.

Similarly, the CEO of Vertic (2020), a Digital Agency, proposed in October 2020 ‘A Meaningful and Safe Digital Life’ as a consequence of the ‘digital-first, work-from-home world’ pattern in a pandemic world. In May 2020, within the UN75 initiative (75 years of UN), four university students from the Netherlands suggested ‘Space For All’ as the SDG18.

Considering this list containing a wide broad of proposals, it could appear rather arbitrary. In the following section, we will shed light on this issue through deeper categorization in order to find meaning in this set of visions.

Country Ownership, Societal Cooperation and Cultural Purposes: A Typology of SDG18

The diversity of proposals on the SDG18 evidence territorial and policy concerns: from a national level to international areas of strong cultural flows. As explored in the previous section, each state has the possibility of choosing an individually prioritized SDG. Even though, debates all around SDGs also occur on the level of civil society, both within institutions (universities, companies, international institutions) and through individual approaches. This section demonstrates the proposals on the SDG18 which we aggregated into three types through our content analysis: country ownership, societal cooperation and cultural purposes (Table 18.1).

Table 18.1 Categories and subcategories of the 18th SDG

SDG18 categories	SDG18 subcategories
Country ownership	Security ownership
	Cultural ownership
Societal cooperation	Fear of insufficient communication
	Fear of global health problems
	Fear of populism and illiberal regimes
	Fear of fragile societal cooperation
Cultural purposes	Anthropic techno-explosion
	Ecologic consciousness

Country Ownership

To start with, there are nationally prioritized SDGs. Each of the 193 countries that officially adopted the SDG declaration are entitled to have their own SDG priorities. As presented in the previous section, the SDG18 examples of Cambodia, Lao PDR and Bosnia Herzegovina are new responses to national priorities. They represent policies aiming at a ‘land free from mines and unexploded ordnance’ (UXO) as a condition for the other 17 SDGs. In these cases, the SDG18 clearly supports a country ownership politics, a government decision of each country with UN involvement, as demonstrated in a Lao PDR official document (Chanthaboury 2016, p. 5):

Lao Government will continue its effort to achieve the unmet MDG goals and targets, including the localized MDG 9 on reducing impact on UXO, which will be implemented as localized SDG18 for our country.

Furthermore, country ownership politics is also applied in the Basque proposal. Nevertheless, in this case the claim for a SDG18 comes from a Public University and not directly from the government. The Basque country example is quite relevant since it urges for cultural ownership. Even though, it lacks considering that the cultural SDG18 is a condition for the other SDGs (as in the other cases presented above).

Societal Cooperation

Societal cooperation is one more aggregated category embedded within another territorial domain. This category contains four ‘fears’ (insufficient communication; global health problems; illiberal and populism threats; and fragile societal cooperation) as will be demonstrated in further steps, directly connecting to the 4th pillar of sustainable development: governance.

Linking to this, within the Societal Cooperation category, some SDG18 proposals may be considered as a reinforcement of the SDG17 (global Partnership). They emphasize dissemination of good practices and governance as priorities of the SDG

Agenda. Evidence for such are the following suggestions of 18th SDG: ‘Visual Sustainability’, ‘Communicate Your Cause’, ‘Responsible Communication’ and ‘Using the Power of Communications, Media and Activism’. These proposals seem to be the proof of the fear that change would not be in the right direction or/and not quick enough for reasons of practical communication and dissemination. There are four communication devices included within these proposals that we consider as a reaction to that: eco-communication; communities-of-practices; training-for-change and SDG-activism (Douek and Grazinoli 2019; Minney 2019; Cáceres 2020; Kock and Carta 2020).

Furthermore, there are three other proposals that have to be considered within this category of societal cooperation (‘Global Health Security’, ‘Cooperation in Good Faith and Common Standards’ and ‘Transgovernance and Empathy’). Anxiety (or even fear) about the risks of cooperation failure could be the meaning behind these proposals. Eventually, three fears are on the foreground: 1. the fear of global health problems which would put humanity biologically at risk, calling for a preventive cooperation; 2. the fear of populism and illiberal threats that may put the course of cooperation at risk; and finally, 3. the fear of a fragile societal cooperation in cultural terms which could threaten transgovernance and empathy (Kickbusch et al. 2015; Bachmann 2016; Becerra 2018).

Nevertheless, the real challenge emerges with the plurality of SDG18 proposals that are neither country-attached nor ways to enhance a better cooperation, governance, or implementation of the 17 SDGs. There are proposals for the SDG18 that are both completely new and that seem to go in completely different directions as it was suggested in the first section of the paper. We argue that this plurality of SDG18 proposals are attempts to interpret cultural directions, trajectories or routes for the presently prevailing crises of humanity and our planet. Therefore, if all 17 SDGs are a way to put humanity into the same boat in the quickest way possible, we understand the SDG18 as ‘a quest for a rudder or a steering wheel’: the consciousness about the lacking of a planned path toward the future: a destiny There were proposals that identified a clear western worldview, the continuation of modernization as techno-explosion or, in a simple way, a business-as-usual model or a ‘discourse of tranquility’ (Blühdorn 2001; Dias et al. 2020). On the other hand, there were proposals that show a worldview from the ‘rest of world’, a clear critique towards modernization or, in a simple way, a model from the margins, built from discourses of alarm, crisis and survival (Mouzakitis 2017; Krenak 2019; Dias et al. 2020). Following we will explore this last categorization of the SDG18: the cultural purposes.

The Cultural Purposes

Interestingly, building upon the Cultural Purposes as a main category, the data on the SDG18 can be aggregated into two different subcategories. We understand these two subcategories as different worldviews and Purposes at Large: Anthropic Techno-explosion and Ecologic Consciousness (Table 18.2). These two Purposes connect

Table 18.2 The two cultural purposes at large

Anthropic techno-explosion teleology-modernization worldview—(a nomadic-urban-progress trend)	Ecologic consciousness teleology-new ecological worldview—(a sedentary-Rurban-Degrowth trend)
Social entrepreneurship in a global society	Personal agency and self awareness
Ensuring the digital age supports people and planet	Evolution of our collective consciousness
A meaningful and safe digital life	Love and joy
Life with artificials	Biocultural heritage
Sustainable automation	Animal health, welfare and rights
Space for all	Empathy for life

directly with the dyads of humanity presenting two valid possibilities: a nomadic-urban-progress trend and a sedentary-rurban-degrowth trend.

Anthropic Techno-Explosion Cultural Purpose

The Anthropic Techno-explosion Cultural Purpose includes the proposals on the SDG18 which manifest a clear western worldview: a ‘social entrepreneurship in a global society’, ‘ensuring a Digital Age supports people and planet’, including ‘life with artificials’ in a ‘sustainable automation’ and enabling ‘life in space’ and ‘Space for All’.

Although these are individual proposals, it does not seem that way. On the contrary, it could be a program for the new (sustainable) modernization of the twenty-first century. It could be seen as ‘embodying a core western worldview’, identifying a new field for progress: economic growth and capitalist expansion beyond the ‘planetary boundaries’ (Steffen et al. 2015). We could also say that these proposals embody ‘progress-as-gamification risk’ with ‘space-as-a-destiny’. Following, we will elaborate on these proposals.

For Hummels to ‘give voice to the beneficiaries’ is the motto of the SDG18, considering that “entrepreneurial initiatives will only belong to the domain of social entrepreneurship if they contribute to human dignity and involve the beneficiaries in deciding whether they are truly being served through the entrepreneurial activities, policies and practices” (Hummels 2018, p. 12).

Hummels calls for urgent investment in ‘capabilities’ for the fulfillment of basic needs for millions of human beings (based on Marx, Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum). Three dimensions are required: innovation, scaling and financial sustainability (Hummels 2018, p. 47). His focus is not on small scale enterprises and their local social and environmental impact but rather on a national and international level. This could be a way to respond to the main challenges of our societies: the fulfilment of basic human needs through the collaboration amongst governments, multilateral organizations, civil society and financiers. For Hummels, SDGs may be considered

as a reference point to the human basic needs, and ‘Social Entrepreneurship’ should be defined as “a company’s contribution to improve the capabilities of humans to fulfill these needs” in order to live a life with dignity (Hummels 2018, p. 12). It is within this context that Hummels proposes the SDG18 as a way to “strengthening the capabilities of individuals and communities to actively participate in and effectively influence policies, practices and activities that are part of SDG agenda”.

He builds on the ‘capabilities’ concept as ‘spheres of freedom and choice’ (Amartya Sen) and on the 10 capabilities typology that constitutes a minimum for a dignified life (Martha Nussbaum). Within this framework, social entrepreneurship plays a relevant role through “the provision of products and services directly to basic human needs that remain unsatisfied by current economic and social institutions” (Hummels 2018, p. 30). The big question is what makes the “social entrepreneurship” really social? The general “desire to benefit society” seems quite insufficient, subsequently being an “initial focus on radical innovations of value chains to improve the social and ecological aspects of production”. This is supported by three dimensions which results from the work of Sen and Nussbaum:

(a) contribution to the fulfilment of basic needs and capabilities through designing, producing or distributing innovative products and/or services; (b) demonstration of the positive and negative outcomes of business interventions reinforcing the capabilities of individuals and communities to fulfil their needs (while contributing to the financial and operational sustainability of the company), and (c) the involvement of the (intended) beneficiaries of these outcomes and other direct stakeholders in deciding on the adequacy of the organization’s activities and results. (Hummels 2018, pp. 30–31).

Summarizing Hummels main argument, he considers that the 2030 Agenda is greatly an overview of the basic needs as well as a good operationalization of the capabilities referred. Nevertheless, he considers that SDGs are somehow silent regarding the 10th capability of the list of Martha Nussbaum: control over one’s environment in a political way—ability to participate effectively in political choices that govern one’s life. Finally, Hummels (2018) proposes a SDG18 as the Social Entrepreneurship in a Global Society:

Promote and strengthen the capabilities of individuals and the communities in which they live to actively participate in and effectively influence policies, practices and activities that are part of the global sustainability agenda (Hummels 2018, p. 73).

The new Digital Age and its rise is the basis for two other proposals. It seems that the idea of “Ensuring the Digital Age Supports People and Planet” emerged in a meeting in September, 2019 of CIFAR (Pan-Canadian Artificial Intelligence Strategy), the world’s first national AI (Artificial Intelligence) strategy (Luers 2020). Luers says that “The digital age is disrupting social systems and driving transformations at a scale and pace unparalleled in history” and uses the words of Marshall McLuhan as an argument: “*We shape our tools, and thereafter our tools shape us.*” (Luers 2020). Luers mentions the ‘Montreal Statement on Sustainability on Digital Age’ to emphasize the digital governance gap in responding to the climate crisis and broader sustainability goals. Thereafter, a new SDG has been proposed, ‘Digital Technologies Serving People and the Planet’ with the following objectives:

- Building a new social contract for the digital age, **which addresses individual rights, justice and equity, inclusive access, and environmental sustainability;**
- Ensuring open and transparent access to data and knowledge **critical to achieving sustainability and equity;**
- Fostering public and private collaborations **to develop and manage AI and other technologies in support of sustainability and equity;**
- Promoting research and innovation **to steer digital transformations toward sustainability and equity; and**
- Supporting targeted communication, engagement and education **to advance the social contract.**

Similarly, ‘A Meaningful and Safe Digital Life’, a SDG18 proposed by the CEO of the company Vertic implies that “we live in a digital-first, work-from-home world”. Sebastian Jespersen states that “Our digital world should be as safe and livable as our physical world. Global corporations should act responsibly online as well as offline. As with all the other SDG areas, we need universal standards that go beyond national laws to protect users and their data.” (VERTIC 2020).

Another proposal is “Life with Artificial—Ensure the Safe, ethical and sustainable integration of Artificial into Society” that comes from MindFuture. MindFuture is a Foundation with headquarters in Denmark—Copenhagen that proposes prosthetics, biotechnology, artificial intelligence as the SDG18 in 2020. MindFuture suggests that “the 18th Global Goal, Life with Artificial, focuses upon how our future lives will be entangled with artificials and our need to adapt and educate people to co-exist and work together with them”. Seven targets are proposed with this new goal: 18.1 Promote Human-Centered Artificial; 18.2 Ensure Ethical Use of Artificial; 18.3 Enhance Awareness of Artificial; 18.4 Strengthen the Sharing of Knowledge; 18.5 Secure Rights to Data Privacy; 18.6 Ensure Transparency in Artificial; 18.7 Support the Achievement of the other SDGs (MindFuture 2021).

Connected with this, ‘Sustainable Automation’ is a proposal presented in the “Statement submitted by non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council” on the 2020 session, 7–16 July 2020, of the ECOSOC—Economic and Social Council of the United Nations:

Post the COVID-19 shutdown; automation will inevitably get fast-tracked. We submit that the United Nations revisit its Sustainable Development Goals and add SDG 18, ‘Sustainable Automation.’ Indiscriminate automation will have a cascading effect, and this is not something the world is prepared for given that we have 7.7 billion humans to cater to and sustain. Sustainable Automation is where we need a better understanding of the business community and political leadership that, ‘profits’ with the ‘proliferation of technology’ should not be without ‘people.’ If we keep people out of the equation, the consequences will undermine all other SDGs and, maybe, render them irrelevant. It is time for the United Nations to have the most critical SDG, ‘Sustainable Automation,’ as an ‘intergenerational goal.

‘Space economy’ or ‘life on space’ or ‘space for all’ is a purpose of progress claimed by groups from the United States and the Netherlands: It is not mere coincidence that the two strong countries of the history of capitalism embrace space exploration and consider it as a 18th SDG. In 2018, a joint report by National Space Society, a

non-profit organization with headquarters in Washington, and the European GNSS Agency suggested “Space Economy” as the 18th Goal. In May 2020, as part of “UN75-2020 and beyond” (2020 activities to celebrate the 75 years of the UN), the topic “Should space protection be added on a global agenda?” was presented for discussion by a group of students from the Windesheim Honours College in Zwolle, the Netherlands, calling for the recognition of SDG18, ‘Space for all’, by emphasizing the responsibility of humanity for the bigger system beyond Earth. A blog based in Leiden University (LeidenLawBlog 2020) gave a brief account on the approach of ‘extending the SDGs beyond Earth’, following Stephen Hawking: ‘The long-term survival of the human race is at risk as long as it is confined to a single planet... but once we spread into space... our future should be safe.’ Supported by this, ‘Space for all’ was proposed as the SDG18.’ The proposal of ‘space for all’ includes four pillars: (1) respect and care for the community of life in our galaxy and universe; (2) ecological wisdom and integrity towards biological systems in space; (3) social and economic justice towards other planets and their resources; and (4) global commitment to democracy, nonviolence, and peace towards potential new forms of life (LeidenLawBlog 2020).

Having demonstrated Anthropoc Techno-explosion as a Cultural Purpose at Large from a Modernization worldview, we now continue with the exploration of Ecologic Consciousness as a Cultural Purpose at Large from the Margins as a new worldview.

Ecologic Consciousness Cultural Purpose

‘Self-Awareness’ and ‘Personal Agency’, enable ‘Evolution of our Collective Consciousness’ and ‘Love and joy’, promoting ‘Biocultural Heritage’, and ‘Animal Health, Welfare and Rights’ resulting in an ‘Empathy with Life’. Similar as to the Anthropoc Techno-explosion proposal, these goals do not sound like individual proposals. On the contrary, it presents a coherent cultural purpose at large towards new urban villages prosperity or intentional communities of global eco-villages. This seems to be a program for a new paradigm of planetary livability in a strong sustainable way. Following, we will elaborate further on this matter.

Kristen Ali Eglinton as well as Sand Hart are what we call ‘facilitators of transformation’, and both present their ideas on SDG18 on personal webpages (Hart 2020; Eglinton 2021). Hart considers that the SDG18 idea is as plain as the innocent question from a 6-year-old kid: “why is it taking so long to heal our world’s problems?”. Likewise, Eglinton uses a quotation to emphasize her point: “Good Policy Requires Better People. Policy is a personal commitment, not just an institutional one. It’s not just about our agencies, it’s about us”. They both propose Self-Awareness and Personal Agency as a SDG18. As Eglinton states, ‘this effort is citizen-driven’ and includes 6 targets: accountability, political advocacy, collaboration, mindfulness, contemplation and compassion. Hart (2020) summarizes the SDG18 as follows, considering the two targets as they are presented in the goal:

To know the impact of our actions, which are possible because of our thoughts, we must have self-awareness. To then take action or change that behavior requires an awareness, or a willingness to seek out and know how to do that, i.e.; personal agency. (Hart 2020).

Devigne's (2019) proposal connects to the one of Kristen Eglinton and Sand Hart by the urgent acceleration of the evolution of our collective consciousness. For Devigne, neither the species nor individuals, families, organizations or nations have a level of consciousness which allows the sense of urgency about the several crises humankind is facing. Therefore, accelerating the evolution of consciousness must become an absolute priority for our current generation and should be the very first SDG that enhances the implementation of the others.

The main challenge lies with the fact that the expansion of collective consciousness depends on the evolution of each and everyone's individual consciousness. And in order to undertake the journey of individual consciousness, we need to understand its prerequisites: What drives or inhibits the expansion of individual consciousness? (...) The evolution of consciousness depends on the evolution of our mind—thinking, intellect and ego. Indeed, our thinking has far more effect on our environment than we could ever imagine. We are actually constantly polluting the environment with our unregulated thoughts, without actually being conscious of it, and this level of pollution is the major obstacle in the individual and therefore collective evolution of consciousness. (Devigne 2019).

Similar to that, David Nabarro refers 'Love and Joy' as a 'key to unlocking and advancing' on SDGs:

We have the agenda for development with its 17 goals. We have a series of principles around which was built. But what was in the minds of the extraordinary people, really tens of thousands which were involved in the development of this plan with its focus on people and the planet? Answer: it was a commitment to a respect for humanity, the human and what each of us actually represents. And that is love! Now, when I mention to people that I think that love is behind this plan for the future, they look at me occasionally quizzily: what do you really mean? And I say: It is wanting the best for other citizens, other people in our world, for those who are on the planet and those who are yet to arrive. And that willingness to want the best, the willingness to trust in the capacity of humans to find the forward pathway is at the heart of everything that is inside this new mindset. I have a little code for it and I let you into my secret: there are 17 SDG; I say the 18th SDG is the Sustainable Development Goal about Love and Joy. Because without love and without a feeling of joy and pleasure about interacting with other humans, achieving the remarkable ambitions of the 2030 agenda is going to be not straightforward. So, without necessary overexaggerating its importance I just want to state here that a love of people of places and of our planet and a respect for people for places and our planet that is born from out of that love is at the center of this mindset and the reimagining the future. (Nabarro 2019).

Another interesting proposal comes from Alexandria Poole (2018) which tackles Biocultural Heritage as SDG18:

I propose that the factors contributing to the loss of ecological knowledge and biocultural heritage serve as indirect drivers for unsustainable management practices. Further, that analysis of the factors leading to the deterioration of local ecological knowledge and biocultural heritage reveal important elements necessary for sustainability that are often overlooked within economic and development policies. (Poole 2018, p. 58).

Poole concludes with the need for a new, additional SDG: “Protect, promote, and engage biocultural heritage to reinforce and support sustainable interconnections between diverse human societies and their distinct environments” (Poole 2018, p. 58).

Ingrid J. Visseren-Hamakers (2020, p. 1) proposes “animal health, welfare and rights” as SDG18, arguing that “the systems governing animal and sustainability concerns are hardly connected at all levels of governance—from the global to local”. The author considers that “we need to mainstream the consideration of the individual animal into our thinking of sustainable development”, claiming that sustainable development is still a merely anthropocentric concept. Nevertheless, the ongoing relations between humans and non-humans get revealed in the new ‘jurisprudence of nature’. The author tackles several interlinkages between animals and sustainability (agriculture and aquaculture; fishing and hunting; protecting ecosystems and species; combating invasive alien species and animal testing for sustainability) arguing that despite these evidence sustainability and animal concerns “have remained notably disconnected”. Based on these arguments, the author highlights the need for an integrative governance of sustainability and animal concerns through a new SDG: the SDG18 on animal health, welfare and rights. Joaquín Leguía Orezoli, director of the Association for Children and their Environment (ANIA) proposes Active Empathy for Life as the SDG18:

We consider that another SDG is needed, which contains the ethical and spiritual dimension of the human being and inspires us to improve, modifying our conduct and practices in favor of a better world. This SDG is “Active Empathy for Life”, which is not seen but is present, which is transversal to the others and which will contribute to sustain and catalyze achievements of the 17 UN SDGs. Thus, was born “ODS 18”, an Unofficial Sustainable Development Goal promoted by ordinary citizens, groups and civil society organizations. (Ania 2019).

This new SDG is proposed with 4 targets:

The goals of the SDG18 are: Goal 18.1: Promote Active Empathy for Life in the world; Goal 18.2: To value nature as a subject of directives, like Mother Earth, and the ancestral knowledge that it cares for; Goal 18.3: Valuing and empowering new generations as agents of change for our sustainable development; Goal 18.4: Promote the 17 Objectives of Sustainable Development of the United Nations Organization (UN) (ania 2019).

This proposal follows initiatives such as International Mother Earth Day (Nations 2009), Mother Earth Rights (Mother Earth Rights 2010) and Earth-centered law (European Union and United Nations Human Settlements Programme 2016; United Nations 2016, 2017). Jane Goodal and Gisele Bundchen present a Mother Earth message, an agreement between humans and Mother Earth calling for ‘Empathy for Life’ as the new SDG18:

My dear children, my precious seeds within you lives a love and creativity will and perseverance that the world needs to live in harmony as a great family. You have the right to grow up with me, to drink my pure water, breath my clean air and eat from my fertile soil, to enjoy my colors and scents and to say thanks to your sister plants to what they give you; to live in the company of animals, to learn from them and care for them as brothers; to hike my forest and climb my trees and mountains and to listen to the silence in my deserts; to run barefoot on my grass, sand and shores of crystalline waters, to dive, splash and swim in my rivers,

lakes and seas; to cool off with the breeze and dance in the rain, to stand in your head and see me smile in the rainbow, to be inspired by sunrises and sunsets and at night to see in the twinkly stars my wink to you. I have the right view you to grow up with me that's how you will get to know me, enjoy, love and protect me, bond with live and my diversity and become good hearted adults. Then, the day will come that you will tell your children that finally human being learned to live having the same impact on their environment as the bee has on a flower and when they hug you, you will look at the sky and see in a tinkly star a wink of pride from me to you, Mother Earth (Mother Earth Rights 2010, n.p.).

Finally, the Ecologic Consciousness Purpose is strongly aligned with the 'Buen Vivir' (Calisto Friant and Langmore 2015; Gudynas 2015; Silva and Guedes 2017), an alter-development proposal based on 'first nations' or indigenous people and assumed by some countries in South America. 'Buen Vivir' is a translation from several local expressions like '*suma qamaña*' (Aymara people—Bolivia); '*sumak kawsay*' or '*shiir waras*' (kichwas/Ashuar peoples—Ecuador); '*ñande reko*' (Guarani peoples—Paraguay, Argentina, Brazil) and '*küme mongen*' (Mapuche-Chile). Finally, this proposal sustains new national public policies.

Discussion of Results: Cultural Purposes at Large and Diatopic/Plurotopic Hermeneutics

In the previous sections we have demonstrated the relevance of the debate around the SDG18 and presented an aggregation of the proposals through a heuristic typology. This resulted in three main categories: Country ownership; Societal Cooperation and Cultural Purposes. These categories evidence the multilevel territorial focus of the SDG18 proposals, demonstrating the rising consciousness of countries which propose specific national SDGs. Furthermore, they demonstrate both the need to—and fears of—strengthening the SDG Agenda. Four main fears were identified: insufficient communication; global health problems; illiberal and populism threats; and fragile societal cooperation. Finally, in a larger context, the Cultural Purposes category facilitated the identification of two different subcategories: Anthropic Techno-explosion as a Cultural Purpose at Large from a modernization worldview; and the Ecologic Consciousness, as a Cultural Purpose at Large from a new ecological worldview.

Hence, we argue that the proposals for the 18th SDG can be aggregated in two different groups: one with reference to the western worldview and the other to nonwestern cultures or to a view at the margins of the western world: a new worldview. In a sense, this classification highlights a critical conscience of 'the west' and 'the rest' (Wolf 1982; Ferguson 2012), as well as critical approaches within a western worldview. This is the case with dichotomies such as 'anthropos' versus 'humanitas' (Osamu 2006); human exceptionalism paradigm versus a 'new ecologic paradigm' (Catton and Dunlap 1978), or, decoloniality movements (Arias 2013) amongst other attempts of labeling the communities yet to come.

Through this, we presented an inductive and mainly descriptive and classifying analysis of the SDG18 proposals, of which, the Cultural Purposes at Large became the main challenge.

We argue that the recent bottom-up movements around the 18th SDG should be tackled through a perspective on the limits of the western epistemology view: the awareness of the abyss among traditions (Santos 2007) and the consequent need to overcome epistemic violence (Spivak 1994) and delay the end of the world (Krenak 2019). The Cultural Purposes at Large achieved through this research are evidencing different traditions and, simultaneously, a challenging dialogue between Anthropoc Techno-Explosion and Ecologic Consciousness.

To cope with—and go beyond—the abyss, ‘ecologies of knowledges’ are required, for opening up a dialogue among knowledges (common sense; techno-scientific and political) and traditions. This means that the Cultural Purposes at Large should be in a permanent exchange and as such, it is inevitable to create proper platforms for those *forae*. Ongoing storytelling is, eventually, ‘a way to delay the end of the world’ (Krenak 2019) and to create bridges among knowledges and traditions.

In another tier of complexity, a diatopic hermeneutics (Panikkar 2021) or a plurotopic hermeneutics (Tlostanova and Mignolo 2009) are to be considered as methodology for such *forae* in order to explore homeomorphic elements which may work as *topoi* (themes) of cultural translation (Seixas 2010). Following Panikkar:

Seeking, among other things, to break out of the hermeneutic circle created by the limits of a single culture, diatopical hermeneutics attempts ‘to bring into contact radically different human horizons’, traditions, or cultural locations (*topoi*) in order to achieve a true dialogical dialogue that bears in mind cultural differences. It is the art of arriving at understanding ‘by going through these different locations’ (*dia-topos*) (Panikkar 2021).

As Tlostanova and Mignolo state:

In contrast to postmodernists, Panikkar does not think that it is impossible to understand the other. Such an understanding for him is inevitable and necessary. Hence, his method of im-parative (not com-parative) philosophy (from Latin *imparare*, to learn in the atmosphere of plurality), which is a way of dialogic and experiential (not interpretative as in Western hermeneutics) learning from the other, thus enriching our thinking by the other’s intuitions and revelations (Tlostanova and Mignolo 2009, pp. 16–17).

Finally, the analysis done throughout this article pinpoints the 18th SDG as a kind of ‘translation device’ (Seixas 2010). This means that we need to continue ‘telling stories’ all around and about the 18th SDG to turn the world into a continuous translation of the two different traditions identified, and to overcome the gap between them. These traditions are, besides two different worldviews, two sociospatial configurations and two ways of live. One presents the urban as the core ecosystem of humanity and the platform for serendipitous technological progress for the community yet to come, even beyond the planetary boundaries. The other, on the contrary, considers rural sedentary relocalization and empathy for all beings as the goal for the community to come. As such, these reveal different reinterpretations of the dyads of humanity. Dialogue, although difficult, is not impossible. The communities of the future may, and probably will, be plural and their realities should result precisely from the different grounds of dialogue that we promote.

Final Remarks: Towards the 5th Pillar of Sustainability?

This article is based on an assessment exercise regarding the SDG + 1 experience, particularly the 18th SDG proposals accessible through the web since 2015. This created a general quest, a 'social need', which we tried to elaborate through the Cultural Purposes at Large.

The 18th SDG was not a strategic process but, no doubt, a collective one, in which many people felt the call to participate, and in many cases eventually emulated others. We believe that the aim to participate and to contribute to a better world is a meaningful aspect of the SDG18 proposals. Different people with different backgrounds and from a diversity of cultures came to the fore proposing an SDG18. By doing that, they became (more) aware of the SDG movement and assisted for its global dissemination. Furthermore, their initiative enhanced an assessment towards SDGs, a will to contribute to—and emphasize—its relevance. We state that the initiative of the SDG18 is a quest of meaning for the whole SDG Agenda.

Considering the meanings of the analyzed proposals, three categories emerged as outputs: country-ownership; societal cooperation and cultural purposes. In terms of country-ownership, two different subcategories emerged (a security and a cultural ownership). Concerning the societal cooperation, four sub-categories came to the fore, based on fears of cooperation failure (insufficient communication; global health problems; illiberal and populism threats; and fragile societal cooperation). Finally, the diversity of the other 52% (12) of the proposals were aggregated in two lists suggested as different Cultural Purposes at Large: An Anthropoc Techno-Explosion (modernization worldview/a nomadic-urban-progress trend) and an Ecologic Consciousness (new ecological worldview/a sedentary-rurban-degrowth trend).

Twelve different proposals on the SDG18 were summed up in these two purposes at large. The Anthropoc Techno-Explosion includes 'Social Entrepreneurship in a Global Society', 'Ensuring the Digital Age Supports People and Planet'/'a meaningful digital life', 'Life with Artificials', 'Sustainable Automation' and 'Space for All'. The Ecologic Consciousness includes 'Self-Awareness and Personal Agency', 'Evolution of Collective Consciousness', 'Love and Joy', 'Biocultural Heritage', 'Animal Health, Welfare and Rights' and 'Empathy with Life'.

Regarding the outcomes of this research, we claim for an international event on the SDG18 as a continuous *forum* on diatopic hermeneutics and cultural translation for a global discussion of cultural purposes. Although SDG + 1 was not an official experience, national and international events on the SDG18 could be a positive possibility for a regular assessment and a boost on the SDG movement. These events would then be an opportunity for awareness for monitoring our pathway. This article highlighted a double destiny which embodies a diatopic cultural hermeneutics in the making, for which we should build a strong awareness in a continuous intercultural translation. We urge the General Secretary of the UN to create an annually SD18 Forum.

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