

**Call for Papers**  
**Applied Theatre and the Sustainable Development Goals: Crisis,  
Collaboration and Beyond**

**Editors: Taiwo Afolabi, Abdul Karim Hakib and Bobby Smith**

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have been central to a range of global agendas including, and not limited to, health and wellbeing, peacebuilding, poverty alleviation, social justice and acting on the climate crisis since 2015, with 2030 stated as the year by which a series of related aims should be achieved. The 17 interlinked goals were designed to be a "blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all" (UN 2017). At their core, the SDGs are noticeably *global* – that is to say, they reflect concerns that need to be addressed by countries in both the global North and South and advocate international and interconnected partnerships as the key vehicle through which to do so. Many of the issues to which theatre and performance are being applied are strongly connected to the SDGs. Indeed, the goals have shaped the wider terrain in which applied theatre takes place, including the setting of agendas and funding priorities by development agencies, global philanthropic organizations and donors. A key contribution applied theatre practitioners and scholars can make to the SDGs are the collective and creative ways their approaches engage with 'wicked problems', not necessarily to offer solutions but to humanize these experiences, build empathy, raise consciousness and advance change (Afolabi 2018).

Despite such clear linkages, little exists to map out the ways in which applied theatre is shaping, and being shaped by the SDG era. This edited book will address this gap, inviting critical insights from practitioners and researchers to provide the reader with insights into the convergences and tensions of working within development frameworks. The book will, therefore, examine global collaborations and consider what the SDG era has meant, and what it might continue to mean, for applied theatre practice and research? It offers a timely intervention: as 2030 approaches, what can be learnt and taken forward in terms of the interactions between theatre, performance, and global challenges?

The book will be divided into three key thematic areas:

**Part one: Applying theatre in times of global crises**

Currently, little exists which maps applied theatre against the SDGs and reflects upon the ways in which these are influencing practice and research. This section frames the book, inviting authors to map the linkages and departures between their work and the SDGs. This section will ask:

- In what ways are theatre and performance being applied to the SDGs? What approaches and frameworks have emerged from these applications?
- Are applied and socially-engaged performance practices *radical enough* given the challenges we face? In what ways might we need to rethink the ways we work to meet the challenge of global crises?

- How are applied and socially engaged performances representing themes of hope and global crises? What are the ethics of such representations?

### **Part two: Collaboration across geographies: tensions and complexities**

The SDGs, agreed upon by UN council members, reframed development as a *global* concern. For example, those experiencing the worst effects of inequality and unbridled neoliberalism were just as likely to live in the global North as the South; we all feel the effects, and contribute toward the causes of, the climate crisis; and, as has been highlighted by the COVID-19 pandemic, concerns regarding our health and well-being impact communities and individuals regardless of where in the world they are located.

In this section, we invite authors to engage with the possibilities of collaboration across geographical and disciplinary borders to address the global challenges outlined by the SDGs. This section will consider:

- What possibilities and limitations do researchers, practitioners, and participants face when working together to address global concerns across boundaries of time, space and disciplines?
- How are applied theatre epistemic networks and communities contributing to national, regional and global sustainable development policy formulation and implementation?
- In what ways are notions of ‘development’ and global collaboration being positively reframed? And in what ways could such collaborations reframe notions of solidarity, challenging the politics and ethics of intervention and saviourism?

### **Part three: Envisioning the future: Looking back to look ahead**

As 2030 approaches, what will come in place of the SDGs, if anything? And how might applied theatre continue to engage with communities to strive for social justice? This final section is future-focused, asking what has been learnt since 2015 and how future interactions between applied theatre and global challenges can be envisioned. Contributions may reflect on:

- The ways in which experiences of success and failure in applied theatre projects can inform future directions
- How a reinvigorated set of conversations concerning ‘post-development’ – or the rejection of development structures – might interact with the applied theatre going forward
- Whether applied theatre will remain relevant post-2030, or will our research and practices degenerate and become obsolete? Will we experience a *withering* of applied theatre, intentional or otherwise?

### **Call for chapters**

Contributions of 5,000-7,000 words engaging with, but not limited to, the above questions and areas of interest are welcomed from established and emerging scholars and practitioners. We particularly encourage co-authorship between scholars and practitioners working together globally. Chapters may engage with any

aspect of the 17 SDGs, should critically interrogate the relationships between global approaches, sustainability agendas, development processes and the aesthetics and ethics of applied performance practice and research.

The editors welcome abstracts for review of 300 words (max), along with 100-word biographies for each author.

### **Timeline**

Deadline for abstracts: 15<sup>th</sup> January 2022

Authors notified: February 2022

First draft chapters due: May 2022

Manuscript submitted: April 2023

### **Please send abstracts to all the editors:**

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### **References**

United Nations (2017) Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 6 July 2017, [Work of the Statistical Commission pertaining to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development \(A/RES/71/313Archived](#) 28 November 2020 at the [Wayback Machine](#))

Afolabi, T. (2018) Participatory Theatre and the Millennium Development Goals Crusades in Nigeria. *Makurdi Journal of Arts and Culture*, Vol. 15.1, 15-32.