

Kluwer Mediation Blog

The Future is Now!

Charlie Woods (Core Solutions Group / Scottish Universities Insight Institute) · Saturday, February 8th, 2020

The start of a new decade offers a great opportunity to reflect and plan. There is a growing consensus that the 2020s will be crucial in transforming the way we live and work if we are to have any chance of ensuring the planet is able to accommodate our species.

Nearly everything we do is going to have to change - how we generate energy, how we build and heat our homes, what we eat, what we buy, how we travel, the nature of work, how we do business, how we value assets and liabilities, how we invest, how we organise and pay for public services to name but a few.

In many respects the last decade was lost in the wake of the financial crisis as many urgent issues crowded out consideration of important long term matters. Despite the distractions UN members did agree a broad [agenda](#) for what needs to be achieved by 2030 - as articulated in the 17 Sustainable Development Goals and their associated targets.



Defining the goal is a crucial first step in any plan, taking the actions needed to achieve the goal is the really tricky part.

The UN's sustainable development report for 2019 '[The Future is Now](#)' highlights the importance of thinking of the goals and targets as a package and focusing on the potential trade offs and synergies between them. *"Advancing the 2030 Agenda must involve an urgent and intentional transformation of socio-environmental-economic systems...Achieving that transformation...means carefully taking into account the interactions between Goals."*

The report includes an initial analysis of the interrelationships between the goals - encouragingly it finds more synergies than trade offs. It also identifies six 'entry points' into underlying systems that offer the most promise for transformation, such as human health and well-being, sustainable food systems and the global environmental commons, along with four 'levers' to help bring about the necessary transformation, including economy and finance and individual and collective action.

Individual and collective action will require dialogue between different groups in order to:

- deepen understanding of different perspectives, issues, interests, needs and opportunities
- generate and decide on options for action
- build coalitions to take action, which realises the potential of the synergies and addresses the trade offs in the most efficient and effective way

Such dialogue needs to take place at many levels - locally, regionally, nationally and globally. Forums such as citizens assemblies, alongside more formal democratic institutions, can provide a framework for dialogue and are being tried in a number of places and contexts, including [Scotland](#).

Mediation and mediators have a vital role to play in helping stimulate and facilitate dialogue to help achieve the necessary transformation. If the future is now there is no time to lose!

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