SOPHIE LEWIS
Full Surrogacy Now: Feminism Against Family
Verso Books, 2019. 224 p. £14.99

When the now not-so-novel Coronavirus hit in the Winter/Spring of 2020, global supply chains seized up. Surrogacy arrangements were no exception, as documented in *The New Yorker* article "The Stranded Babies of the Coronavirus disaster" (July 2020, by Lizzie Widdicombe). The piece centered on Ukraine, a popular destination for international surrogacy. The country is poor (with GDP of about USD 3,000 per capita) and at prices around USD 50,000 per baby, it delivers at a bargain. There is a catch though, married couples only need apply. Singles or same-sex couples have to look elsewhere, the United States, for example, or California to be specific.

There are other places, but California offers nontraditional families what Ukraine limits to traditional ones: guarantees that that parenthood will be assigned to the intended parents, singles or couples of any gender combination. This equal opportunity comes with a hefty price tag—somewhere north of USD 100,000. Nevertheless, surrogacy is a growth business. In the United States, the number of births to gestational surrogates almost tripled between 2007 and 2016, to 5,521 according to the CDC (2018).

For a business that deals in common ingredients and a mature technology, surrogacy is curiously expensive. Traditional surrogacy (using the surrogate's eggs) can be done with a minimum of medical intervention. Gestational surrogacy uses donated eggs, but assisted reproductive technology (ART) is now in its fourth decade. Nevertheless, the price tag remains high, as do the hoops to jump through, adding to already compelling human drama.

Full Surrogacy Now is a prosurrogacy tract that finds plenty to fault in the current situation (pp. 21–22):

> What is the point of this book? The book is not a book primarily derived from case studies. Nor, as you've seen, does it argue that there is something somehow desirable about the "surrogacy" situation such as it is. It presents brief histories of reproductive justice, anti-surrogacy, and saleswomanship at one particular clinic—but its main distinction, or so I hope, is that it is theoretically immoderate, utopian, and partisan regarding the people who work in today's surrogacy dormitories. The aim is to use bourgeois reproduction today (stratified, commodified, cis-normative, neocolonial) to squint toward a horizon of gestational communism. … Full Surrogacy Now is animated by hatred for capitalism's incentivization of propertarian, dyadic modes of doing family and its purposive starvation of queerer, more comradely modes.

In case you are not entirely sure what is meant by "comradely modes," Lewis elaborates (p. 26):

> Let's bring about the conditions of possibility for open-source, fully collaborative gestation. Let's prefigure a way of manufacturing one another noncompetitively. Let's hold one another hospitably, explode notions of hereditary parentage, and multiply real, loving solidarities. Let us build a care commune based on comradeship, a world sustained by kith and kind more than by kin. Where pregnancy is concerned, let every pregnancy be for everyone.

It should be noted that informal and uncompensated (altruistic) surrogacy is perfectly feasible in the United States, where an unmarried mother can in effect chose who adopts her child. Still, altruistic surrogacy is rare, and it is a fair guess that the limiting factor is the availability of surrogates. As for compensated (commercial) surrogacy, Lewis seems to be of two minds. Payment to the surrogate is something Lewis supports. However, having condemned "commodified and stratified reproduction," justification takes some footwork. Tying herself in knots and Marxist jargon, Lewis settles on arguing that "gestational labor" is work, taking a page from the 1970s' "Wages for Housework" campaign.

Sophistry aside, few would begrudge the surrogate. Pregnancy is physically taxing; giving up a baby sounds soul crushing. But now, the surrogacy contract looks like a contract on persons—can it get more "commodified?" The high cost of surrogacy could be tackled by the surrogate being from a low-cost place, even country, a solution that takes us deep into not just "stratified" but downright "neo-colonial" territory.

The book features an Indian "case study" of Dr. Patel and the Akanksha Infertility Clinic. Dr. Patel is named 250 times in the book's 224 pages, but to be clear, the book only contains commentary on secondary material culled from popular outlets such as Oprah, Vice News, or *Time* magazine. Dr. Patel and her brand of "philanthrocapitalism" is an easy target. A 21st century Madam, rich off the backs of destitute women cooped up in dormitories or a feminist Robin Hood leveraging technology to redistribute wealth from the ultrarich?—discuss.

However unseemly, money has not been the main source of controversy. Public outrage has focused on disputes over the fate of the fetus/child. Can the surrogate be forced to terminate the pregnancy? What if there the child does not live up the intended (contracting) parents' specifications? What if the surrogate wants to keep the child? Disputes over who can do what, when have resulted in some well-publicized cases that have roused national pride and strained diplomatic relations. Since 2015, a number of go-to countries have shut their doors to international surrogacy, including Thailand, India, Nepal, and Mexico.

Among the few countries still allowing international, commercial surrogacy, we find Russia. What makes Ukraine more attractive than Russia for surrogacy? (A quick Internet search suggests that the list prices are similar.). The difference comes down to legal motherhood. In Ukraine, the intended parents can be on the birth certificate. By contrast, Russia follows the time-honored doctrine that a child's legal mother is the woman who gives birth—the surrogate's name goes on the birth certificate. The surrogate then surrenders the child for adoption by the intending parents.

Why is this important? Imagine if you, the client, is known to be worth millions. The surrogate has borne your baby and is listed on the birth certificate as its mother. The contract says she should give up the baby, but who is to take a baby from its

mother? Suddenly, the surrogate's USD 20,000 looks like a pittance … Allowing the intended parents' names on the birth certificate sidesteps what economists refer to as the hold-up problem.

Clearly, surrogacy can be big business. Still, many countries want no part of it, limiting surrogacy to altruistic such for domestic (even kin only) clients. The United States, Ukraine, Russia, and Georgia are among the few countries today that allow surrogates to be paid and to contract with nonnationals.

In addition, a number of countries seek to prevent their nationals from using surrogates in another country. So while a couple from Australia can contract with a California surrogate, Australia may not recognize the contractual relationship. An international convention could make cross-border surrogacy easier, but one is unlikely in the offing. Just because two men are allowed to be on the birth certificate in California does not establish them as a family unit in, say, Italy. The legal morass may not be by design, but one would be excused for detecting a lack of interest in clearing it up. The reticence may reflect unease around the matter; a notion that reproductive services should not be commercialized. Maybe such a development would be harmful to children (and by extension, anyone who has ever been a child). Maybe the concern is for women. Could it be that surrogacy, while no means cheap, cheapens motherhood?

How could that be? Does the surrogate not provide much-needed relief to the barren woman? Joy to the childless couple? Yes, but unregulated surrogacy can also do something else: provide men with a commercial, and possibly cheaper, alternative to marriage. In the West, until not long ago, a man needed to marry to obtain children, legally speaking. Marriage is still the best a man can do to guarantee fatherhood—a key feature of the marriage contract is the so-called paternity presumption, which states that the father of a child born in wedlock is the husband of mother. Therefore, surrogacy poses direct competition to marriage. The potential for surrogacy to undermine marriage may be one reason many countries limit its use to married couples. In fact, surrogacy operates in a social landscape reminiscent of that of adoption. Heterosexual couples are favored, payments are viewed warily, and there is a notion that it should be reserved for the infertile.

Incidentally, adoption has also been viewed as a threat to marriage, and when unregulated as in Roman antiquity, it reduces the status of the wife, as she loses her status as the only way to obtain a legitimate heir. In fact, adoption in the West is relatively recent. The United States was early to recognize legal adoption (Massachusetts Adoption of Children Act of 1851); perhaps out of necessity, as the fraction of orphaned children without any identified relatives to care for them must have been higher than in Europe. In Western Europe, adoption only (re)appeared in the early 20th century, having been banned by the Catholic Church. The Church controlled marriage and wanted to make sure marriage maintained its monopoly on delivering legitimate heirs. Women benefited in the process as the wife stood between men and posterity. She could not be replaced by a concubine, a slave, or be divorced. And she could not be circumvented by the use of adoption.

However, the discussion that surrogacy deliberations remind me the most of is that surrounding prostitution. To advocates, it provides a valuable service, and an unparalleled income opportunity to the sellers. No harm, no foul. To opponents,

the practice exploits and denigrates women. Clearly, surrogacy is not prostitution. Neither is it its opposite. Arguably, in a Venn diagram of sex and procreation, the two occupy distinguishable but overlapping spaces. Prostitution is sex without children (to the client); surrogacy is children without sex. Marriage sits at the intersection. Lewis touches upon the similarities (p. 42): "As with sex work, the question of being for or against surrogacy is largely irrelevant. The question is, why is it assumed that one should be more against surrogacy than against other risky jobs."

The question is warranted, but unfortunately, treated as rhetorical (*de rigueur* among prostitution advocates). But prostitution is not just any other job (risk aside). If it were, it would not be well paid. Stigma is what allows a low-skilled and labor-intensive job to be well paid. Stigma is what keeps the profession from being overrun with aspiring interns. Fair or not, without stigma, prostitution would just be another grubby, low-paid job.

The book presents surrogacy as a feminist challenge to patriarchy, but surrogacy is about as central to women's status as gay marriage. To be able to rent a uterus is clearly of greatest importance to those lacking one. Incidentally, gay men have surfaced as a key block in the prosurrogacy constituency. If surrogacy poses a challenge, it is not so much to patriarchy as it is to the status of women. While the qualitative direction is clear, the quantitative importance is less so.

Women in the West have survived, even found liberation in the reduced significance of the traditional wife role. Still, I do not know what a brand new world of widespread surrogacy would look like for women and children, the groups the least well served by surrogacy. That incertitude, not "capitalism's incentivization of propertarian, dyadic modes of doing family," may be why many societies have chosen to tread carefully.

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DIERDRE MASK
The Address Book: What Street Addresses Reveal about Identity, Race, Wealth, and Power

St. Martin's Press, 2020. 336 p. $26.99

It seems pinched to open this review with reference to that often cited, but seldom read, author Michel Foucault. Yet, some foundation for the relevance of this book—which has sent reviewers, including this one, scrambling to explain why they like it so much—to the journal's readership is necessary. Foucault was intellectually perceptive; if, as always, textually obtuse, in introducing the concept of biopower—the power of the state to control, through information, our bodies. For example, not of least interest, through enumeration. Now, Foucault and

his acolytes are to power as was J. Edgar Hoover to Communism—they see it everywhere.

But, nonetheless. We, those under power's biothumb, have not only age, sex (which has become rather complicated), marital status, labor force status, and other tags attached to us; we have something else, as well: a street address. Or, if you are in the majority of the world's population, none at all; a grave affront to power. No address means no possibility to open a bank account, register to vote, sign up for social insurance, etc. You are invisible; you do not exist; save, perhaps, as a roaming mobile threat. For most readers of this review, it is an annoying but comical Catch-22—try renting an apartment in Berlin without a German bank account; try opening a German bank account without a German address—that can be finessed by privilege, canniness, and charm. For others, it is not so simple and more consequential. Wanderers of all kinds—such as Travellers, Roma, Tuareg, and Bedouin, to name a few—have been regarded as a threat to authority, often persecuted or forcibly sedentarized (as in Central Asia under Stalin and Libya under Qaddafi). And, lack of a reliable address system cripples cadastre, the basis of any modern property rights regime, with the worst impact on women in the countries where they are disfavored by traditional law.

There are at least half a dozen themes covered in the book, whose chapters are essentially feature articles aimed at the bourgeois-bohemian high-end journal outlet, meaning that the volume can be dipped into at will.

One theme is the link between address and public health; specifically infectious disease. The story of John Snow and cholera mapping in London is related, as are related stories of infectious disease tracing in Haiti and Africa. Most readers of this journal would not be blown away, but this would make for excellent student reading. Not discussed, but obvious to anyone living the episode, is that the reasonably (so far) better Covid response of Europe relative to the United States owes something to the fact that, here, you must be legally registered at a current address, with civil penalties if you are not. That has simplified contact tracing.

One chapter describes NGO efforts to use GPS technology to assign street addresses in order to bring Kolkata slumdwellers access to fundamental social rights, meagre though they be. So, too, are episodes of resistance to being pinned down, like a butterfly, on a high-resolution map. In Maria Theresa's Austria, addresses were a despised means of enforcing conscription. Here in Central Europe, currents run deep—Christians received Arabic numerical street numbers; Jews, whom she hated, Roman ones. In rural West Virginia of the 1960s, residents had George Jones' pappy's fear of the revenue man (*White Lightning*, if you want to know the song). One chapter looks at mental maps and the neuroscience of human spatial perception. Another looks at how cities without addresses at all (antique Rome, for example), got along. Tokyo in the 1970s was not much better, This critic had an enlivened evening in that city when it is a miracle that he got back to his field headquarters. The author recounts a similar experience (presumably less enlivened, to grant her the margin of appreciation), in Africa. Many readers of this journal will have had the experience of professional travel to cities where, however, meticulous the written instructions from the desk clerk, the hotel driver requires multiple stops to seek directions.

Much of the book is not about addresses per se as it is about street (and broader local geographic) names. Place names are perhaps more political than anything else, at any scale, even national. American political scientist Aaron Wildavsky stated with authority that any country with "Democratic" in its name is not. There is a debate, in the United States, over Confederate street names that is as polarized as that over Confederate monuments—and there are a lot more street names than there are statues. The author is even-handed; nowhere more so than in her treatment of Mississippi novelist and Civil War historian Shelby Foote (1916–2005), whose patrician defense of the Confederate heritage has been controversial. A minor dig at the author—referring to Foote's spoken English as "Tupelo Honey" serves neither the subject nor Van Morrison well. "Seductive" or "enchanting" is what she is trying to get at; she should come out and say so.

In New York City, as described in the opening chapter—a strong one, too, the author knows her rhetorical sequencing—an astonishing proportion of City Council resolutions as judged by the ledger, sometimes bitterly disputed, concern assignment of superfluous geographical designations to appease one political pressure group or another—with much symbolic but little practical significance. The Population Council, publisher of this journal, is located at One Dag Hammarskjold Plaza (after the Secretary-General of the United Nations shot down over today's Democratic Republic of the Congo in circumstances that remain mysterious), just a block down from Katherine Hepburn Place (she lived in the neighborhood). Ask a cop fifty meters away and he will look at you with bewilderment (2nd Avenue at 48th is what will get you there). The creation of New York City geographical fantasies honoring Russian dissidents under Mayor Edward Koch was brisk; just to insult the Russian government and shore up the Jewish vote. More recently, there was a wave of namings in honor of first responders who died in the 9/11 attacks.

Back in the bad old NS-days, German street and place names referring to Jews were enthusiastically changed to honor Hitler; then after the war, place names linked to Nazis were changed again with equal dispatch, albeit with socialists complaining in one case that the Jew being commemorated was a capitalist leech. Current German geography, East and West, is sprinkled with tributes to anti-Nazi and Communist icons; some major (Rosa-Luxemburg-Platz and Karl-Marx-Allee in Berlin) and some so minor as to belong in a footnote to a footnote. *Sic transit gloria mundi*, they used to say when crowning a pope. But, Lomé still has Avenue du Dr. Franz Josef Strauss, named after the legendary Bavarian Minister-President who once visited there (he exercises dominion over the Munich airport, as well). Fly into Tbilisi, and you will get to your hotel in the cold dawn along George W. Bush Avenue. And Teheran has Bobby Sands Road (formerly Winston Churchill Road; now, there is *sic transit gloria for you*).

The process of how modern streets retain their traditional names receives a great deal of attention. Restricting myself to cities where I Iive, in Vienna, one of my physicians is located on Schlachthausgasse (Slaughterhouse Street), which should lead me to change doctors, but does not. In Paris, the famous Beat Hotel of Ginsburg, Gysin, Burroughs & Cie. in the 6th arrondissement, is located on rue Git le Couer, mysteriously evolved from the name of Gilles le Queux, a 13th century cook who exercised his craft there. My Middle French is limited, but I believe this refers to his pigtail.

Shelley had a thing or two to say on ephemeral tributes in *Ozymandias*. True sedimentation is perhaps more likely to be found in the persistence of offensive historical street names that the locals have learned to live with or, perhaps, even favor for conversation-openers at cocktail hour. For example, in England and Wales, Black Boy Road (where the author considered a house) and Gropecunt Lane (which exists in multiple variants and locales, typically in proximity to the medieval market). John D. Loudermilk and the Nashville Teens gave us Tobacco Road (after the crop on which the residents relied); Steve Earle gave us Copperhead Road (after a poisonous snake), but only Middle French could bequeath us Gropecunt Lane. Back in West Virginia, where a crash address assignment program was implemented under time pressure, there are generations to come who may be consigned to live on Beer Can Road.

The book is a romp through history and across the globe. The author puts on no academic airs—her mastery of the subject is so obvious that she does not have to. Erudition rarely comes over the PDR transom, but this book has it. While the apparatus is somewhat loose, it suffices and the author's credibility is unassailable. Most books this journal reviews showcase the authors' intelligence, but few of those reviews state that the author is genuinely gifted. This one does. She may even be afflicted with genius.

Population Council LANDIS MACKELLAR

SHORT REVIEWS

by Dennis Hodgson, Geoffrey McNicoll, John Bongaarts

RICHARD ALBA
The Great Demographic Illusion: Majority, Minority, and the Expanding American Mainstream
Princeton University Press, 2020. 336 p. $29.95

In a 2015 run-up to the 2020 Census, the Census Bureau tested a new "composite" ethnorace question that added "Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish" to the list from which respondents could choose one or more races (p. 70). It would allow an individual with an attenuated Hispanic background to identify as being simply "White" or "Black" if they so desired. The test was a success, and the Bureau thought it would be able to drop the problematic two-question format found in the 2000 and 2010 censuses that asked individuals first whether they were Hispanic and then to identify their race(s). In 2018, the Office of Management and Budget, charged with assuring consistent data collection across federal agencies, vetoed the composite question, and in 2020 mandated that individuals of mixed minority and white origins be considered "minority." These decisions facilitated enforcement of civil rights laws, but also worked to enhance minority numbers. In 2000, the Census Bureau produced its

first projection of the country's major ethnoracial components—American Indians, Asians, Blacks, Hispanics, and Whites—and forecast that the white majority would become a minority by 2059. Its 2014 projections had a 2044 transition date, with the Bureau noting that "by 2060, the share of this group [non-Hispanic Whites] is projected to be just 44 percent." Dramatic headlines followed. With no changes in data collection procedures, we can expect future dramatic headlines as the 2020 Census provides baseline data for new projections.

Richard Alba, Distinguished Professor of Sociology at the City University of New York, thinks there is much that is problematic in this narrative. In Chapter 2, he notes how politicians on the right, most notably President Trump, exploited for political gain the vision of Whites losing their majority status. In Chapter 3, he outlines how Census Bureau actions and pronouncements work to promote this vision. In Chapter 4, he identifies his central problem with Bureau projection procedures: no matter how diluted one's minority origins might be, one forever remains on the minority ledger, as do all one's offspring, current as well as future. The farther out the projection, the more questionable become the results since little actually is known about how individuals will ethnoracially self-identify in the future. Alba notes that there already is "a significant group of individuals" on the American Community Survey (ACS), which asks an additional ancestry question, who check boxes that make them non-Hispanic Whites of Mexican ancestry. Surveys also show that mixed Anglo-Mexican ancestry "substantially increases" the probability of individuals never or hardly ever thinking of themselves as being of Mexican origin (p. 132). Alba focuses on the rapid growth over the past several decades of mixed ethnoracial parentage (14.1 percent of all births), especially on the 10.6 percent of infants having a mixed minority-white parentage. In Chapter 5, Alba uses ACS, census, and birth certificate data to determine the varied family situations of minority/white offspring, starkly contrasting the situation of Asian/white offspring and black/white offspring. On average, the former live in suburban two-parent, high-income, high-education households, while the later live in single-parent urban households of limited economic means. He finds the situation of Hispanic/white offspring being closer to that of white offspring than to that of Hispanic offspring. Since mixed marriages are increasing, and since minority/white offspring have an increased likelihood of marrying a white spouse, America's ethnoracial composition will become an ever more blended one.

But how will future Americans view themselves in ethnoracial terms? In Chapter 6, Alba outlines two relevant theories that address this issue: race theory and assimilation theory. The Census Bureau's projection methods presuppose race theory assumptions: racial labels are imposed by the more powerful race group which then "patrols" ethnoracial boundaries to preserve unequal access to opportunities and resources, thereby preserving the reality of racial distinctions over time. Historical and contemporary evidence of institutionalized racism against Blacks and against mixed black/white offspring is such that Alba thinks race theory best explains their limited success in gaining entrée to "mainstream" American institutions. But Alba, on the basis of his Chapter 5 analysis, is convinced that other minorities, especially those with mixed white backgrounds, will increasingly be assimilated into America's major economic, educational, political, and social institutions. Alba notes the rapid post-WWII assimilation of Italian-Americans and Eastern European Jewish Americans, both early twentieth century immigrant groups that suffered significant

discrimination. The rapid expanding economy at the time, he contends, permitted "non-zero-sum" upward mobility that eased the absorption of these formerly excluded groups into mainstream America. Admittedly, today's economic conditions are less robust, and levels of inequality have increased, but in Chapter 7 Alba identifies a new source of "non-zero-sum" mobility: the exiting of many non-Hispanic white baby boomers from the labor force. Positions in mainstream institutions are opening up, and more ethnoracially diverse members of the younger generations are beginning to fill them. In Chapter 8, Alba suggests specific policy interventions aimed at enhancing advancement opportunities for Blacks and undocumented Hispanics, groups still facing deep-seated discrimination. —D.H.

Lawrence A. Palinkas

Global Climate Change, Population Displacement, and Public Health: The Next Wave of Migration

Springer International Publishing, 2020. 234 p. €94.63

The markers of climate change are both the gradual rise in ambient temperatures and sea levels and the greater frequency and magnitude of the extreme events (droughts, fires, hurricanes, floods) accompanying those rises. Any of these conditions may induce or compel the people affected to move. The moves may be more or less voluntary, in-country or international, and temporary or permanent. The movers are all, in Lawrence Palinkas's expansive category, environmental migrants—"climigrants" in the unappealing neologism he uses throughout this book. Although often termed environmental refugees, unless they are also fleeing political violence or persecution none can claim refugee status under the 1951 convention.

The roughness of the conceptualization is suggested by the range of guesses of the potential numbers of persons displaced cited in the book: 20 million to 200 million by 2050 according to Norman Myers, an early writer on the issue; 500–600 million "at risk of displacement" according to the Environmental Justice Foundation; perhaps 2 billion by the end of the century reported in an extravagant scenario of sea-level rise. More concrete figures come from actual events, as in the series of brief case studies the author assembles. Three are weather-related—Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans in 2005, Hurricane Maria in Puerto Rico in 2017, and the wildfires in California in 2017 and 2018—where displacement numbers are known even if there is not an assured connection to climate change. Prospective enforced retreat in the face of coastal erosion along the US Atlantic seaboard may seem a similarly clear-cut situation, as is the eventual resettlement from low-lying Pacific island states. On the perennial poster case of Bangladesh, beset by ever-greater floods and storm surges, Palinkas is cautious: climate change "may be viewed as a factor that contributes to existing patterns of migration" but "it is not the primary driver." His caution does not extend to a chapter titled "Fleeing the drought: the great migration to Europe." The migration referred to here is from the Middle East and Africa. Climate change is supposedly implicated in the Syrian civil war and in the conflict between sub-Saharan herders and grazers, in turn fueling the migrant stream to Europe. It is acknowledged that the great majority of those originally displaced—

typically nine out of ten—remain in the same or a neighboring country. Their designation as environmental migrants seems arguable: at least proximately, they had likely fled not drought but barrel bombs or the depredations of Boko Haram and Tuareg jihadists. The relative few who then choose the hazardous path to Europe certainly include some with strong asylum claims but for the most part seem almost the embodiment of economic migrants, many of whom have staked large financial bets on the services of people smugglers.

The study is well-sourced in a large secondary literature. It is light on demography (population growth—adding one or two billion over this century—is barely mentioned as a force compounding environmental problems). On the other hand, it gives a fair amount of attention to the damaging effects of dislocation on migrants themselves. Palinkas is a professor of social policy and health at the University of Southern California and expert on the psychological effects of disasters. On policy and practice, the book mostly avoids the geopolitical realism that might point to still more stringent migrant vetting and hardened state borders, in favor of "efforts to enforce existing mechanisms such as the Sendai or Cancun frameworks or the Nansen Initiative" to assist all environmental migrants, whatever the reason for displacement. It supports "strategies for preventing, managing, and mitigating climate-related population displacement and its effects through the development and maintenance of partnerships involving academics, policy makers, service providers, communities, and climigrants themselves." —G.McN.

J. SACHS, G. SCHMIDT-TRAUB, C. KROLL, G. LAFORTUNE, G. FULLER, F. WOELM

The Sustainable Development Goals and COVID-19. Sustainable Development Report 2020

Cambridge University Press, 2020. 510 p.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were adopted by the United Nations (UN) in 2015 to "end poverty and set the world on a path of peace prosperity and opportunity for all on a healthy planet" by 2030. This ambitious framework includes 17 goals (e.g., no poverty, zero hunger, good health, quality education, etc.) with 169 targets and 231 unique indicators. The SDGs have been widely adopted to guide policy makers in development efforts around the world, but they also have been criticized as too unwieldy and all-encompassing. *The Economist* (March 26, 2015) concluded that the "SDGs are unfeasibly expensive" and "are so sprawling and misconceived that the entire enterprise is being set up to fail." Nevertheless, the SDGs are now an integral part of the global development movement and are often cited by advocates of specific interventions.

The Sustainable Development Report 2020 (SDR2020) was prepared by teams of independent experts at the Sustainable Development Solutions Network and the Bertelsmann Stiftung. It is separate from the The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2020 published by the UN. The project is directed by Jeffry Sachs, who was an advisor to UN Secretaries-General Kofi Annan and Ban-Ki Moon in the creation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and SDGs.

As in previous years, the SDR2020 presents and aggregates data from all UN member states to describe each country's progress towards achieving the SDGs and

indicates areas requiring faster progress. Estimates of indicators rely on the most up-to-date data from variety of official and nonofficial sources. In order to summarize levels and trends in country performance, the report calculates indices for each SDG with a scale from 0 to 100 (worst to best). A country's overall SDG Index score and its scores on individual SDGs can be interpreted as a percentage of optimal performance. The overall SDG index score ranges from a high of 84.7 in Sweden to a low of 38.5 in Central African Republic. The report's central chapter summarizes global and regional trends in index scores, and appendix tables present two-page summaries of levels and trends for SDG indicators for each country.

Besides struggling with a range of methodological issues, the authors faced the difficult task of succinctly summarizing a very large set of data (115 SDGs indicators for 193 countries). Unfortunately, there are few general findings, because the degree of progress towards achieving the SDGs depends on (i) country/region, (ii) the specific SDG, and (iii) level or trend. On average, progress since 2015 has been fastest in low- and middle-income countries especially in East and South Asia. Africa scores low but showed significant improvements in a number of SDGs. OECD countries, which have on average the highest scores, made only limited progress. The report provides a valuable but rather brief summary of these regional differences.

A second objective of SDR2020 is to review policy efforts to implement the SDGs. This assessment is based on information gathered in new expert and public opinion surveys to gauge political leadership in support of the SDGs at the country level. Results confirm that the SDGs framework is increasingly used at many national and international statistical institutes and other data providers. The adoption of the SDG framework by policy makers is growing but more limited.

The report's clear exposition in graphs and tables and the many country and regional statistics will no doubt be appreciated by policy makers and researchers in national and international organizations. However, the value of the findings is somewhat limited by the lack of current data for many indicators. As the authors discovered, most estimates are not up to date and a substantial proportion of the data points available now even have a year of reference that predates the adoption of the SDGs. This diminishes the value of publishing country-level estimates on an annual basis, as indicators for many countries change little from one year to the next.

The report was in preparation when the Covid-19 epidemic struck. A brief discussion of this huge new human and economic crisis is included, and the authors identify which SDGs will likely be most heavily affected. The epidemic will cause massive disruption of progress on the SDGs for years to come, but it was too early to assess this damage at the time of the publication of the report (July 2020). —J.B.