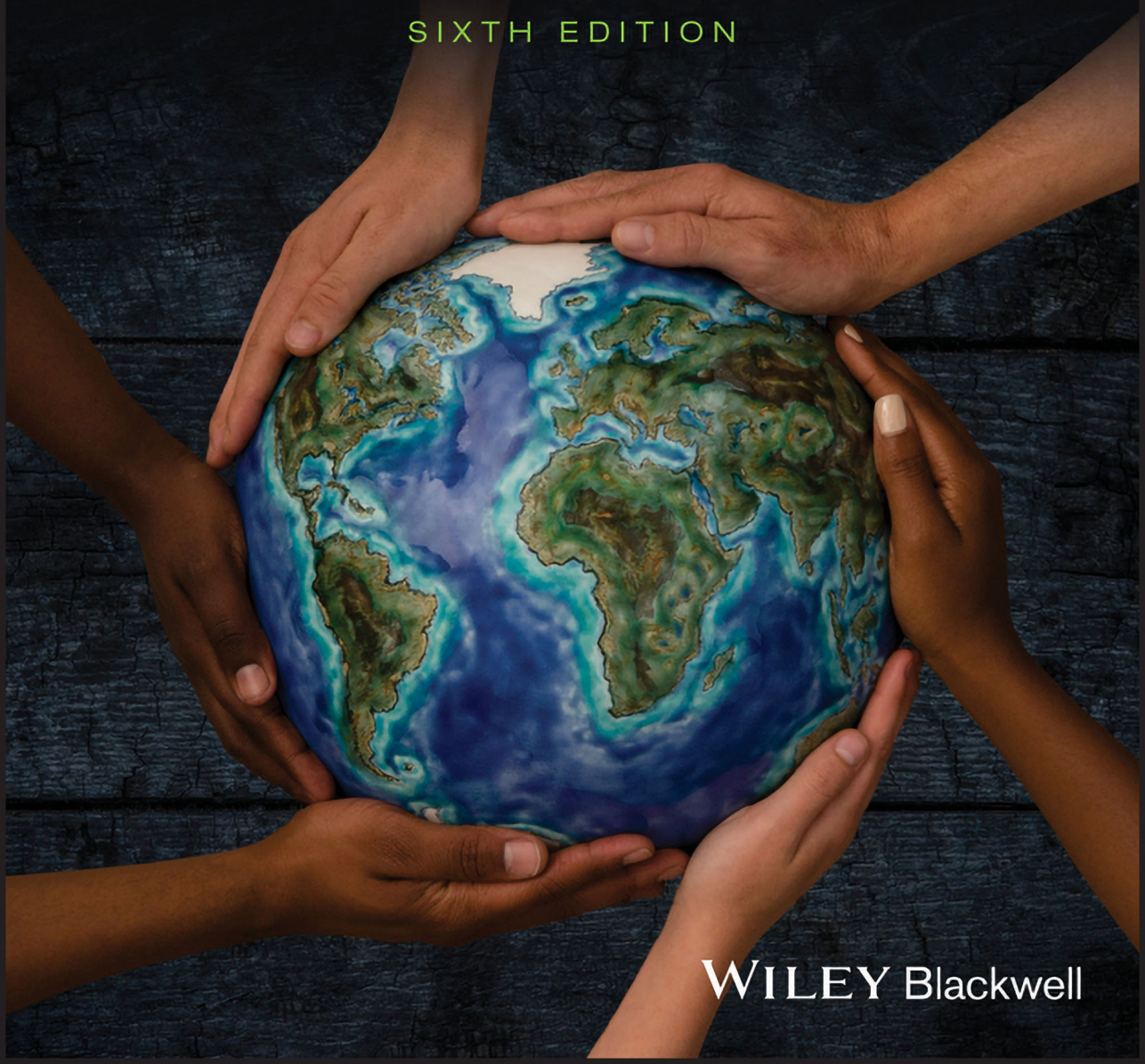
KRISTEN A. HITE | JOHN L. SEITZ

# GLOBAL ISSUES

## AN INTRODUCTION

SIXTH EDITION



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# Global Issues
## *An Introduction*

SIXTH EDITION

Kristen A. Hite and John L. Seitz

WILEY Blackwell

This sixth edition first published 2021


*Edition History*
Blackwell Publishers Ltd (1e, 1995); Blackwell Publishing Ltd (2e, 2002 and 3e, 2008);
John Wiley & Sons Ltd (4e, 2012 and 5e, 2016)



*Registered Offices*
John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 111 River Street, Hoboken, NJ 07030, USA
John Wiley & Sons Ltd, The Atrium, Southern Gate, Chichester, West Sussex, PO19 8SQ, UK

*Editorial Office*
9600 Garsington Road, Oxford, OX4 2DQ, UK

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Wiley also publishes its books in a variety of electronic formats and by print-on-demand. Some content that appears in standard print versions of this book may not be available in other formats.



*Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data*
Names: Hite, Kristen A., author. | Seitz, John L., 1931– author.
Title: Global issues : an introduction / Kristen A. Hite and John L. Seitz.
Description: Sixth edition. | Hoboken, NJ : Wiley-Blackwell, 2020. | Includes bibliographical references and index.
Identifiers: LCCN 2020012767 (print) | LCCN 2020012768 (ebook) | ISBN 9781119538509 (Paperback) | ISBN 9781119538523 (Adobe PDF) | ISBN 9781119538486 (epub)
Subjects: LCSH: Economic development. | Developing countries–Economic policy. | Developing countries–Economic conditions. | Economic history–1945–
Classification: LCC HD82 .H528 2020 (print) | LCC HD82 (ebook) | DDC 338.9–dc23
LC record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2020012767
LC ebook record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2020012768

Cover Design: Wiley
Cover Image: © David Malan/Photographer's Choice RF/Getty Images

Set in 10.5/13pt Minion Pro by SPi Global, Pondicherry, India

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

*To those who serve the needs of others – humans, animals, and plants,*
*all essential parts of our lovely but endangered planet*

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# Acknowledgements

This edition benefited from the substantial research contributions of Brian Farrell (Wealth and Poverty), Monika Shepard (Population), Jason Farr (Food), Carlos Saavedra (Energy), Katherine Liljestrand (Natural Resources and Pollution), and Liz Schmitt (Technology and Sustainable Futures).

We would like to thank the following reviewers who made useful suggestions for improving this edition: Dr Laté Lawson-Lartego, Amanda Davis Edwards, Ed.D. Brian Farrell, Justin Vaughan, Merryl Le Roux, Liz Wingett, Caroline McPherson, and Rajalakshmi Nadarajan.

We would also like to thank Wofford College, both for providing author John Seitz with an office and for supporting the development and teaching of Global Issues as a semester-long course, which enabled author Kristen Hite to take the class from Dr Seitz in the late 1990s and orient towards the subjects covered in this book.

# Introduction

## The Creation of Global Issues

What causes an issue to become a "global issue"? Are "global issues" the same as international affairs – the interactions that governments, private organizations, and peoples from different countries have with each other? Or is something new happening in the world? Are there now concerns and issues that are increasingly being recognized as global in nature? It is the thesis of this book that something new is indeed happening in the world as nations become more interdependent. While their well-being is still largely dependent upon how they run their internal affairs, increasingly nations are facing issues that they alone cannot solve, issues that are so important that the failure to solve them will adversely affect the lives of many people on this planet. In fact, some of these issues are so important that they can affect how suitable this planet will be in the future for supporting life.

The issues dramatize our increasing interdependence. The communications and transportation revolutions that we are experiencing are giving people knowledge of many new parts of the globe. We see that what is happening in far-off places can affect, or is affecting, our lives. For example, instability in the oil-rich Middle East affects the price of oil around the world, and since many countries are dependent on oil as their main source of energy, the politics of oil becomes a global concern.

Many nations in the world are now dependent on other nations to buy their products and supply the natural resources and goods they need to purchase in order to maintain a certain standard of living. An economic downturn in any part of the world that affects the supply and demand for products will affect the economic status of many other nations. This is an important part of globalization that will be discussed in Chapter 2.

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Even a global issue such as world hunger illustrates our increasing interdependence. A person might say that starving or malnourished people in Africa don't affect people in the rich countries, but even here there is a dependency. Our very nature and character depend on how we respond to human suffering. Some rich nations such as the Scandinavian nations in northern Europe give a significantly higher portion of their national wealth to poor nations for development purposes than do other rich nations such as the United States and Japan.

Global issues are often seen as being interrelated. One issue affects other issues. For example, climate change (an environmental issue) is related to an energy issue (our reliance on fossil fuels), the population issue (more people produce more greenhouse gases), the wealth and poverty issue (wealthy countries produce the most gases that cause climate change), the technology issue (technology can help us create alternative energy sources that produce less or no greenhouse gases), and the future issue (will the changes we are making in the Earth's climate seriously harm life on this planet?). As we recognize these interrelationships, we realize that usually there are no simple solutions.

Interdisciplinary knowledge is required to successfully deal with the issues. The student or adult learner reading this book will be receiving information from multiple disciplines such as biology, economics, political science, environmental science, chemistry, and others. Neither the social sciences nor the physical sciences have the answers on their own. Feel good about yourself, reader, because you are engaged in the noble task of trying to understand how the world really works. Complicated? Yes, of course. Impossible to discover? Certainly not. Just read seriously and carefully. It takes effort and you can keep learning throughout your life.

Perhaps, global issues were born on the day, several decades ago, when the Earth, for the first time, had its picture taken. The first photograph of Earth, which was transmitted by a spacecraft, showed our planet surrounded by a sea of blackness. Many people seeing that photograph realized that the blackness was a hostile environment, devoid of life, and that life on Earth was vulnerable and precious. No national boundaries could be seen from space. That photograph showed us our home – one world – and called for us to have a global perspective in addition to our natural, and desirable, more local and national perspectives.

This book discusses *some* of the main current global issues of our time. The reader can probably identify others. During the reader's lifetime, humanity will have to face new global issues that will continue to surface. It is a characteristic of the world in which we live. Maybe our growing ability to identify such issues, and our increasing knowledge of how to deal with them, will enable us to handle the new issues better than we are doing with the present ones.

# Chapter 1

# What is Development?



## Developing Toward What?

When we talk about global issues, "development" can be a confusing term. Development, as used in this book, is the ways in which economies progress through their societies to improve well-being. This requires us to consider how to measure progress as a society at the global level. Cultures across the world have very different ideas of how to define progress. Many define it by material wealth. But not all, by any means. Bhutan, for example, has a national happiness indicator in addition to measuring national wealth by the more conventional means of domestic production (gross domestic product – GDP).

This inevitably causes us to wonder *what we are developing toward?* In other words, what is the end goal? More stuff? Longer lives? Better health? Smarter people? Better relationships? Greater happiness? That answer is not an easy one: embedded in it are many different assumptions that vary based on different cultures and values.

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The United Nations defines human development as the enlarging of human capabilities and choices; in a yearly publication it ranks nations on a human development index, which tries to measure national differences of income, educational attainment, and life expectancy.[1] The United Nations has suggested the purpose of development to be the creation of an environment in which people can lead long, healthy, and creative lives. But for most of the last century, most of development was geared towards increasing national incomes, on the assumption that developing towards wealth could lead to other benefits. Let's explore further what twentieth-century development looked like, and then consider what it means for an increasingly interdependent world with finite resources.

## Twentieth-Century Approach: Development as Economic Growth

For roughly the past century, "development" has been viewed primarily through the lens of economic growth plus the social changes caused by or accompanying that economic growth.[2] Economists have traditionally used gross national product (GNP) or a country's average per capita income as the measures of economic development. Some organizations, such as the World Bank, also divide countries according to their level of income, and consider low- and middle-income countries to be "developing" and high-income countries to be "developed." High-income countries were early adopters of intensive manufacturing. They amassed large amounts of wealth that lifted many of their citizens out of poverty; economists referred to these "industrialized" nations as "developed" nations. Most of them are located in the northern hemisphere, so they are also sometimes called "the North."

If we accept the vision of development as building wealth, it makes sense that the overwhelming priority is to transition from economies of subsistence (prioritizing getting households the basic resources on which to live) to economies of consumption (prioritizing getting households greater incomes to rapidly increase consumption and further stimulate the economy). This approach typically leads first to a transition towards industrialized economies, and then, as machines replace workers, to a second transition towards economies based on goods and services.

In the 1950s and 1960s, it was common to think of development only in economic terms. It was, of course, economic growth with the agricultural and industrial revolutions that created the increased food and higher standards of living that permitted more human beings to inhabit the planet. The development that took place in Europe and the United States as they industrialized led to an increase in the average family's income, and this meant more money to buy goods, including food.

In the second half of the twentieth century, nations generally took one of two approaches to development. The first approach was to develop government policies focused on creating jobs and providing social services to meet basic needs.[3] The other approach, encouraged by international development institutions like the World Bank, re-evaluated the role of government in economic development and

focused on minimizing government influence on market prices by gearing public policies away from regulation, encouraging the private sector to provide social services (also known as "market-based solutions").[4] This market approach became known as the "Washington Consensus," focusing on economic efficiency and fiscal discipline. Much foreign assistance in the twentieth century certainly encouraged nations along this route. The market approach in particular assumed that economic growth was functionally synonymous with "development."

Unprecedented economic growth and material prosperity took place in a handful of countries like the United States during the twentieth century, and this was made possible, in large part, by cheap energy and abundant access to resources, often exported from other countries. The desire to achieve the high living standards of the Northwest by following the route taken by the United States and other wealthier nations – both capitalist and communist in the past – with their emphasis on industrialization has been attractive to many governments as a seemingly clear development path towards poverty reduction.

Mostly by default, this became the "model" for development, where individual lifestyles and modes of industrial production were based on converting raw materials to more expensive and useful productions, utilizing plentiful, inexpensive, polluting energy – a model that has driven climate change and placed the future of our planet in jeopardy. For example, in the 1990s, the Chinese economy grew at an amazing 10 percent a year, lifting millions of people out of poverty. And with this new wealth came a massive need for increased energy production as well as a tidal wave of demand for the increased production of consumer goods.

But does this kind of development work for everyone? Results have been mixed, and you can use this book to help make your own assessment. Some of those working in international development recognized that this development strategy was a gamble, that maybe benefits would not trickle down to the poor, but the alternative of trying to work directly with the millions of rural poor did not seem viable. Poverty rates dropped substantially in a number of industrialized countries – although in some places, national incomes went up more than poverty rates went down. The Washington Consensus led on one hand to increases in the GDPs of many countries but also to cuts in social spending – and as a result some of the poorest became even worse off.[5] By some estimates, only 20 percent of development assistance reached rural populations, even though the clear majority of people lived in rural areas.[6]

The process of creating wealth has also created negative impacts to the environment. Countries are slowly realizing that the effects of economic activity on the environment should not be ignored. But awareness is not high in countries, especially ones that are still in the early stages of industrialization. This helps explain why some countries have welcomed polluting industries, such as factories that manufacture asbestos, since jobs today are often prioritized over a vague worry that workers may contract cancer in 20 to 30 years. But also, a slowly growing number of people realize that if the economic activity that gives jobs to people harms the environment, future costs resulting from that economic activity may become substantial.

## Twenty-First-Century Approach: Developing towards Sustainability

At first, global discussions about development, environment, and social issues occurred on very separate tracks. The 1972 Stockholm Conference on Human Environment was seen by many poor countries as an effort by rich countries to constrain the development of the rest of the world under the auspices of environmental protection. The view at that time was that environmental protection was a luxury that could only be afforded once a country had developed. Besides, countries argued, most of the environmental problems were located in the handful of countries that had been able to accumulate wealth as they industrialized without the controls. But as environmental problems became more widespread, so did discussions about how they related to the development process itself.

In the 1970s an awareness grew – in both the "less developed" nations and the "developed" industrialized nations – that some of the social and environmental changes which were coming with economic growth were undesirable. More people were coming to understand that for economic development to result in happier human beings, attention would have to be paid to the effects that economic growth was having on social and environmental factors. Were an adequate number of satisfying and challenging jobs being created? Were adequate housing, healthcare, and education available? Did women have equal opportunities? Were people living and working in a healthy and pleasant environment? Did people have enough nutritious food to eat? Every country is deficient in some of these factors and, in this context, is still "developing" in some capacity.

By the 1980s, concerns were mounting about the social and environmental implications of more and more countries following a development model based on ever increasing rates of production and consumption. By 1987, the concept of "sustainable development" emerged in a landmark report by the Brundtland Commission called Our Common Future. The term means that economic growth in the present should not take place in such a manner that it reduces the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Economic growth and efforts to improve the living standards of the few or the many should be sustainable; in other words, they should be able to be continued without undermining the conditions that permit life on Earth, thus making future development impossible or much more difficult. The term represents an effort to tie economic growth, the protection of the environment, and social development together, a recognition that future economic growth is possible only if the basic systems that make life possible on Earth are not harmed. It also implies a recognition that the economy, the environment, and social conditions are all important, that economic development and the reduction of poverty are essential to the protection of the environment.

The United Nations environment conference in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 made the term "sustainable development" widely known around the world. Sustainable development was endorsed by the conference and a new organization – the Commission on Sustainable Development – was set up under the United Nations to monitor the progress nations are making to achieve it. But it still was not a mainstream concept for the development community.

Meanwhile, the social dimensions of development were becoming more acute. The elevated profile of the "Right to Development" from its introduction in 1981[7] made it clear that development needed to be inclusive, not just economically lucrative in the context of raising a country's average GNP. The Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing elevated gender issues to a new level. The International Labor Organization saw a proliferation of global labor agreements to address some of the workforce challenges of industrialized economic growth. The World Bank and other multilateral development banks began adopting new policies and procedures to address unacceptable impacts to communities caught in the crosshairs of well-intentioned development projects. And amid all of this, poverty remained persistent and pervasive, even as the twentieth-century development model continued to churn out ever-increasing rates of production and consumption.

## Wave of Hope: The Millennium Development Goals (2000–2015)

As the challenges of inclusive development became more acute, in 2000, the nations of the world historically committed themselves to work toward helping the neediest when they endorsed the Millennium Declaration and adopted the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which refocused development on the "basic needs" approach, recognizing that market-based solutions alone could not solve widespread poverty and that governments needed to support effective social policies such as healthcare and education to avoid marginalizing the poor.[8] Between 2000 and 2010, natural resource shortages contributed significantly to food and energy crises, in turn challenging traditional notions of economic development based on the once dominant Washington Consensus model.[9]

Continuing to focus on positive developments, one can find many reasons to feel optimistic. In 2000, representatives of 189 nations met in a conference sponsored by the United Nations and adopted eight goals they would work toward achieving in the new century. Each goal, which was stated in general terms, had specific targets to help measure progress in reaching the goal. This is significant in that development was broken down into more elements and indicators than the twentieth-century model focused on GNP. Education, gender equality, child and maternal health, infectious diseases, and hunger were all incorporated into the development goals. And significantly, one of the goals (MDG # 7) was focused on environmental protection, with a notable goal of integrating the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programs. Finally, the last goal was focused on addressing some of the structural problems of the twentieth-century development model, with the aim of improving the global financial system, addressing countries' mounting debt load, and offering special considerations for the poorest and other specially situated countries.

By 2014, several targets of the Millennium Development Goals had been met, including halving hunger rates as well as the extreme poverty rate: by 2010, 700 million fewer people lived on $1.25 per day than in 1990.[10] Advances in malaria and tuberculosis treatment saved an estimated 25.3 million lives by 2012, and 2.3 billion people

gained access to drinking water from an improved source.[11] Development aid had increased by 66 percent.[12]

At the beginning of the MDG period, the concept of "sustainability" was a small part of the development dialogue. At that time, "sustainability" was mostly a popular buzzword for those who wanted to be seen as pro-environmental but who did not really intend to change their behavior. It became a public relations term, an attempt to be seen as abreast with the latest thinking of what we must do to save our planet from widespread harm. But within a decade or so, governments, industries, educational institutions, and organizations started to incorporate "sustainable development" in a more serious manner.

A number of large corporations appointed corporate officers for sustainability. Not only were these officials interested in how their companies could profit by producing "green" products, but they were often given the task of making the company more efficient by reducing wastes and pollution and by reducing its carbon emissions. Many colleges and universities adopted sustainability as a legitimate academic subject and something to be practiced by the institution. Many nonprofit organizations added the promotion of sustainability to their agendas. This all set the stage for a more formal convergence of the UN's environmental and development agendas.

As sustainable development gained momentum, the "Washington Consensus" of the twentieth century began to erode. Nancy Birdsall and Francis Fukuyama of the Center for Global Development argued that the global recession driven by the United States at the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century changed the model for global development and that now the focus is much more on the ability of governments to help the poor and provide social protections.[13] They predicted that many mid-and lower-income countries would reject the free-market approach and adopt a basic needs approach while increasing domestic industrial production. "In fact," they explained, "development has never been something that the rich bestowed on the poor but rather something the poor achieved for themselves."

## Sustainable Development Goals (2015–2030)

In 2015, the United Nations adopted Sustainable Development Goals for 2015–2030 to replace its mainstream Millennium Development Goals in place from 2000–2015. While the sustainable development agenda from the 1992 Rio Earth Summit factored in clearly to some of the individual goals, the overall focus was still on poverty alleviation through the historic paradigm of economic development. During that same period of implementation, countries began to embrace sustainable development as a key pathway to creating an economy that can provide for the population without undercutting the people and planet that form the basis of that very economy.

In 2012, countries met again in Rio for a new global summit on sustainable development. By this time, it was clear the development and environment agendas were becoming more aligned. Countries shared progress they had made towards sustainable development and discussed challenges going forward, but largely diverted conversations about targets. There were questions about how to best integrate economic and