



### Teaching formula: proven and novel concepts of engagement

A textbook that documents in any meaningful, systematic and pedagogical manner why, to what extent, how, and with whom companies can effectively contribute to achieving the SDGs, has not yet been published. The latter represents the ambition of this book. It brings together the latest insights on dealing with complex problems and translating them into relevant business strategies. The frame of the SDGs was chosen not only because it is the most relevant agenda for the world community or because it is embraced by so many (particularly big) companies, but also because it provides an excellent basis to study the impact of corporate behaviour on sustainability issues and to discuss all relevant principles of sustainability.

The book benefits from years of experimenting with integrating the SDG-agenda in teaching programmes at bachelor, master and post-master (executive) level. We were able to develop several innovative teaching tools that facilitated a structured discussion and learning effort around the SDGs at three important levels of analysis:

- (1) **the macro-level**, relevant because it defines the ‘degree of complexity’ of the societal challenges of the SDG-agenda and the approach needed to address them: as wicked problems or wicked opportunity;
- (2) **the micro-level**, vital because it defines the strategic repertoire that needs to be adopted by individual companies: making SDGs core requires internal alignment and a solid understanding of the business case for sustainability;
- (3) **the meso-level**, equally vital because none of the SDGs can be achieved by companies alone: implementing the SDGs requires external alignment with societal stakeholders.

At each of these levels, tools needed to be developed to enable strategists and researchers to define approaches to effectively address the SDG challenge. They include scanning techniques to understand the wickedness of the SDG-agenda; creating a safe space for developing innovative solutions (‘wicked-problems plaza’); a web-based tool to map the gap between intention and realization (the ‘better business scan’); upgraded CANVAS models to include richer value propositions of companies; poster presentations that can be used to communicate, share and discuss research results; partnership portfolio mapping exercises and tipping point analyses.

This book showcases some of these techniques. They aim to help tutors to include the SDGs in their learning curriculum. The book consequently provides an accessible textbook for graduate and executive students in economics and business studies that are interested in enhancing the

involvement of companies in effective approaches towards sustainability challenges in general, and speeding up the SDGs in particular.

## Supportive material

The teaching formula adopted in the book is already applied at RSM Erasmus University. This has resulted in the development of a large number of direct teaching aids (**concepts, modules, poster- and quick-scan techniques**), and in the creation of long-distance supportive material, such as **clips** on all SDGs (embodied in RSM's 'Positive Change'-agenda website) and a MOOC on the SDGs.

In 2019, the Rotterdam School of Management launched a **MOOC** (Massive Open Online Course) specifically dedicated to the SDGs. The course '**Driving business towards the Sustainable Development Goals**' introduces all 17 SDGs. It includes video statements and cases from business, academia, policymakers and students on how to deal with the SDGs. Learning objectives of this course:

- Know what the SDGs are, why they are important and how each individual can be an agent for positive change in the world;
- Develop a positive, critical, aware and courageous attitude towards the SDGs;
- Be able to identify interconnectedness of the SDGs and the challenges behind solving them;
- Understand the role of business in the transition to sustainable development to create a prosperous future for all;

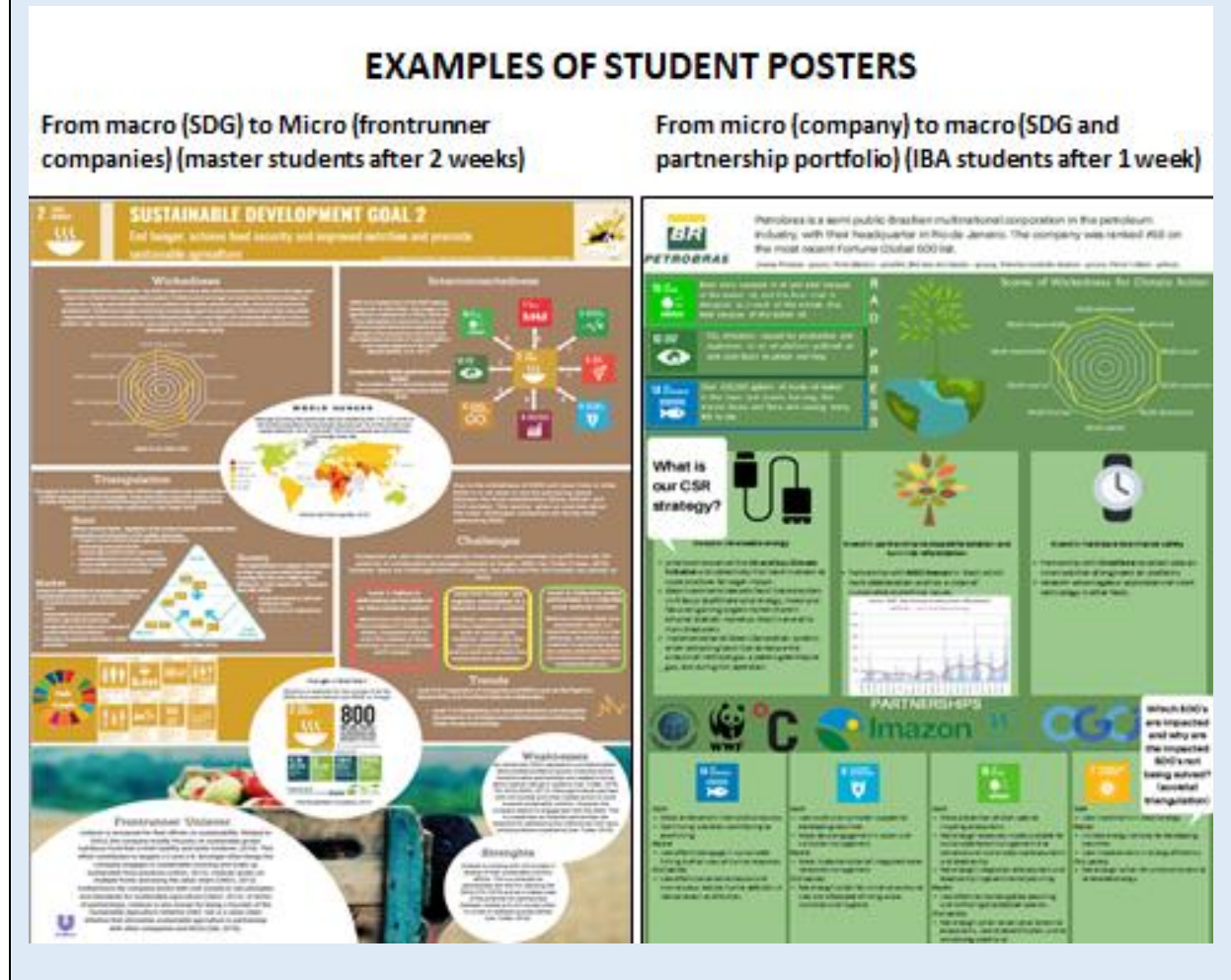
The MOOC was granted the 'excellence' award by the UN Sustainable Development and Solutions Network. For more information, please visit:

<https://www.coursera.org/learn/sdgbusiness>.

**SDG cases:** for every SDG a number of cases (and teaching notes) are written. They are take a business perspective and thus require engagement from the perspective of one or more functional areas of management, such as strategy, marketing, supply chain management, human resource management or finance. All case place the presented managerial challenges in the context of sustainable development. Principles and concepts common throughout the cases include: sustainable development as an integrated concept, having environmental, social and economic dimensions. Case organizations include: Unifrutti (Philippines), Priva, Sisar (Brazil), Rotterdam University of applied sciences, Women on Wings, Port of Rotterdam, RET (public transportation), Eosta, Interface, Rabobank and WWF, Sustainable Finance, Refugees, Cooffee of Andradas, Sustainable finance (and more to come). Video learning materials and other resources are available at RSM's SDG website: [www.rsm.nl/sdgs](http://www.rsm.nl/sdgs).

In 2019, we launched the **Better Business Scan**: this online tool enables managers to map the sustainability transition phase they are in. The scan takes 15 minutes and provides immediate personal feedback. It measures the size of the gap between sustainability intentions (business case) and realization (business model). Based on this position, the most important tipping points the company is faced with can be analyzed, and what type of leadership skills are needed. In chapter 9, we elaborate on the 'intention-realization' gap. For access to the (free) scan, please visit: [www.betterbusinessscan.org](http://www.betterbusinessscan.org)

**Poster presentations** increasingly turn out to provide a fruitful didactical approach for challenging students to come to grips with complexity, get to the point, apply a number of analytical techniques, and engage in interrater-reliability and peer-review processes that, until recently, were primarily used in scientific conferences (see two examples at varying levels of education).



The main focus of this book is to support students, executives and scholars in developing proper frameworks and concepts. The number of detailed **case descriptions** (addressed in separate boxes throughout the book) has, therefore, inevitably been kept relatively limited, although illustrative examples were thoughtfully selected. The book includes short cases, supportive boxes, graphics and tables to enhance educational and action research goals and to clarify concepts. Cases on the implementation of the SDGs in general are included throughout the text (Parts I and II), as are exemplary cases on companies' approaches to the SDGs (Part III).