

Missing Perspectives on Class in Sustainable Development Goals: A Comprehensive Review

Roskilde University

Group Number:
V2360118294

Group Members:
August Bek, Tristan Brelage, Casper Gjødvad Pedersen, Jon Ture Roslund

Supervisor:
Lone Riisgaard

Handed in:
18th December 2023

Number of characters excl. appendices:
146.047

Number of character incl. appendices:
173.464

Summary

This study carries out a systematic review of state-of-the-art critiques of the Sustainable Development Goals, by drawing on theoretical insights from class analysis, Social Reproduction Theory, and World Systems Theory. We found extensive literature on the shortcomings of the SDGs. We singled out a study that addresses the SDGs' role in the perpetuation of class-related struggles in a global capitalist system and used it to guide us through the literature review. Following from this, this study scrutinizes the interplay between class dynamics and the SDGs in relation to their role in addressing or perpetuating class-related concerns in capitalism.

The basis of the above-mentioned theoretical framework enabled us to carry out an extensive analysis that not only includes a descriptive explanation of the state-of-the-art critiques of the SDGs but also allows them to present their own analytical theses. In this study, the consistent application of this theory revealed research gaps that can be found especially in the area of class theory and missing explorations of the world-system. There is a neglect of class perspectives in both locally specific and globally general perspectives on the SDGs, which partly takes place within a so-called intersectional framework. Moreover, within the critiques we found the world-system perspective missing completely. Particularly the integral connection between capitalism and imperialism was neglected as both an observation as well as an analytical framework within the state-of-the-art critiques. Some critiques found that SDGs contributed to accumulation of dispossession, but this study identifies that the reviewed literature does not contextualize the SDGs within the polarized patterns of the world-system. We suggest further research integrating a similar theoretical framework to explore the effects and motives of the SDGs within the world-system, how they interact with class relations, and how they might even influence class relations.

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
Theory: Class, reproduction, and world systems	2
Preface	2
Importance of class.....	2
Class as an objective social relation	2
Critique of intersectionality: Homogenization of identities	4
Social Reproduction Theory and the SDGs.....	6
World-System Theory	9
Conditions of contemporary capitalism	9
Polarized Capitalism and Development	10
Ecologically unequal exchange and class	12
Capitalism and Ecological Crisis	13
Social Reproduction in the World System	14
Methodology	16
Operation of Theory	16
Method of literature of review.....	18
Literature Review.....	20
Class perspectives onto Sustainable Development Goals.....	21
Opening class discussions in state-of-the-art SDG critiques.....	23
SDGs lack localization.....	23
SDGs de-politicized sustainable development approach	26
SDGs preserve colonial power relations	29
Analysis: Class as a gateway for sustainable development critique	30
Class analysis as an expansion of already existing critiques	31
The SDGs in the World-System	35
SDGs, Migration, and Imperialism.....	37
SDGs and Power Structures	39
Limitations	40
Conclusion and outlook	41
Further research	42
Bibliography	44
Appendix.....	58
Appendix 1	59
Appendix 2	60
Appendix 3	68

Introduction

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a global development agenda developed by the United Nations (UN) within the Agenda 2030 to widely transform society economically, socially, and environmentally. This transformation effort is expressed in 17 different goals with numerous targets and indicators for every goal. All of these as well as the general framework of the SDGs are subject to a wide array of criticism as well as optimization suggestions. Building on this, this study presents a systematic review of state-of-the-art critiques of the SDGs and then puts them in the wider context of class analysis, Social Reproduction Theory, and World System Theory, where shortcomings of contemporary analyses are highlighted, and new research areas are brought up. Based on the critique of the SDGs raised in state-of-the-art critiques, this study developed out of an interest in addressing whether the existing literature integrates considerations in relation to the conjunction between class dynamics and the SDGs. Specifically, this study asks what part the SDGs play in addressing or perpetuating class-related concerns in capitalism. The following research questions (RQ) and hypotheses (H) emerged and guided the development of this study:

- RQ1 What shared argumentative patterns are found in state-of-the-art critiques of the SDGs?
- RQ2a How are the SDGs put into the wider context of capitalism in state-of-the-art critiques of the SDGs?
- RQ2b How are state-of-the-art critiques of the SDGs incorporating class perspectives within the world-system?

Based on these research questions, this study proposes the following hypotheses:

- H1 The state-of-the-art critiques of the SDGs will incorporate a wide array of thematic and methodological approaches. Our expectation is that initially a) many criticisms will be oriented towards the implementation of the SDGs, an improvement of the targets and indicators and b) that the actual criticisms of the SDGs themselves will criticize the hierarchical structure and lack of local perspectives.
- H2a We suspect that contemporary critiques of the SDGs will not sufficiently contextualize the SDGs within the framework of global capitalism and will move along normative lines that do not question sustainable development as such.

H2b Contemporary critiques of the SDGs will consider class perspectives, if at all, exclusively along a normative intersectional observation. This incorporates that class is, on the one hand, reduced to an identity and, on the other hand, formulated as a separate category of analysis, if at all, in relation to income, not in relation to objective social materiality.

Departing from a framework drawing on class analysis, Social Reproduction Theory (SRT), and World Systems Theory, this project provides a thorough systemic review of the existing literature on the SDG agenda, with a focus on drawing out the literatures' shortcomings in relation to challenging the exploitative power dynamics caused by the institutionalization of capitalist values and ideologies.

This study will now continue to present the overall theory according to which the literature review and analysis will be built on. The methodology explains the specific ways of how this study attained and filtered state-of-the-art critiques of the SDGs and present the corpus for the literature review, where the perspectives, connections, and contradictions in the literature are discussed. The analysis then functions as the broader perspective that uses the reviewed literature as the starting point and works out relevant research gaps as well as common analytical shortcomings regarding critiques of the SDGs. Lastly, limitations of this research are identified and put into perspective of possible future research.

Theory: Class, reproduction, and world systems

Preface

In the following, a working definition of class and class struggle is presented. In our theoretical outlook we situate the SDGs within theories of the world-system and unequal ecological exchange. Ultimately, this section lays out the theoretical framework of this study's analysis of the comprehensive literature review.

Importance of class

Class as an objective social relation

Definitions of class, not only from a Marxist perspective, can be rather ambiguous. Defining class can, therefore, be an ambitious task that poses multifaceted explanations and interpretations that reveal many different layers and variations of class(es). Applying historical materialism poses a philosophy of social analysis for an extensive range of social phenomena encapsulated in 'class'. Doing so, class analysis attempts at addressing "the epochal trajectory

of social change as well as social conflicts located in specific times and places” by using macro-level analysis of the institutional form of the state as well as micro-level analysis of individuals and their subjective beliefs, etc. (Wright, 2009, p. 16).

Marxist class analysis thus functions fundamentally as an analytical framework in which the historically specific position of social classes is defined by their relation to the economic (re-)production of said society. Marxist analysis thus functions as an analytical tool to unearth exploitative social relations. There are certain advantages of such a strategy for class analysis, also when criticizing or analyzing the SDGs. Perhaps most relevant for researching and analyzing critiques of the SDGs is class analysis’ principle of ‘coercion and consent’. The argument is that systems who solely rely on coercion for the exploitation of labor would make it too easy for the exploited classes to resist exploitation (Wright, 2009). The exploiting classes therefore have strategies for soliciting active consent in order to limit the costs of repressing the resistance of exploited classes. These strategies include strengthening workers’ loyalty to businesses through the creation of internal labor markets and, perhaps most relevant in relation to the SDGs, strategies that support ideological positions in favor of the moral and practical desires of capitalist institutions. Since the cooperation of the exploited is needed within exploitative class relations, the exploiters’ strategies are more likely to attend to creating consent in different ways in order to include the interests of the exploited group (Wright, 2009). These strategies utilized by exploiting classes within exploitative class relations can also be understood as class struggles, as they represent a struggle of the exploiting classes to maintain dominance over the means of production.

Class struggles are irreconcilable struggles in social classes that play a key role in human social development throughout the establishment of social order. Class struggles are part of every social formation since the development of sedentary agricultural production. To permanently guarantee that surplus labor is enforced, a social majority is subjected to the rule of a social minority by limiting the means of the majority to exercise the ability to satisfy their interests and needs. These restrictions generate resistances that fight against this movement. Using Marxist analysis, classes can only be defined in their relation to each other, thus, being dependent on each other. Conceptually (and historically), classes exist through class struggles (Marx, 1977). Social classes are big social groups that divide societies and that are defined by their relations to the economic (re-)production of said society. Classes are thus defined according to their internal dispositions to act and along their external possibilities to act, differentiated and, if necessary, opposed to each other (Bukharin, 2021). The forms of

distribution stand in direct correlation to the forms of production. A class's position in production determines its ability to act on the outcome's distribution (Bukharin, 2021).

A macro-level class and class struggle analysis is of most significance, once we understand the UN and the SDGs as part of class structure, as this study critically engages with state-of-the-art critiques of the SDGs. Approaching the SDGs from a macro-level perspective, therefore, enables this study to view the Agenda 2030 as a development narrative that not only shapes global class structure and other institutions according to its (so-called) comprehensive and universalist development agenda, but also how it disguises a capitalist agenda by promising to do so.

Critique of intersectionality: Homogenization of identities

Contemporary analyses of discrimination and marginalization are often based on the theoretical approach of intersectionality pioneered by Kimberlé Crenshaw and the Combahee River Collective. This study, however, follows the critique of Mendivil and Sarbo (2022) on their perspective of the shortcomings of these approaches: Intersectionality often mixes different forms of discrimination together as having the same origins or impacts. It does not appropriately distinguish between exploitation on the one hand and discrimination on the other. Analytically speaking, exploitation is different from discrimination: Discrimination, broadly speaking, is a change in treatment based on various social norms (Mendivil & Sarbo, 2022). It can occur in isolated, individual situations, while not necessarily being oppression: "Because in order to move from discrimination to a relationship of oppression, it needs the overall social, structural disadvantage of the named group" (Mendivil & Sarbo, 2022, p. 113; Translation provided by the authors). Intersectionality, they suggest, formulates class as an identity. Contrasting this, they present a materialist critique of intersectionality theories that starts at the level of identity and their assigned experiences:

"Neither are capitalist and worker simply identities characterized by having or not having money. Rather, they stand in a specific relationship to one another, in which the wealth of one is based on the poverty of the other. That is why capitalism requires primitive accumulation in the first place ... The relevant aspect here is that this lack of property ownership [Eigentumslosigkeit] of the working class is not only a result, but a prerequisite, of the relationship between capital and labor. That is, workers are not only poor because they are exploited, they can be exploited in the first place because they are poor" (Mendivil & Sarbo, 2022, p. 111; Translation provided by the authors)

One should distinguish between intersectionality as a concept and intersectionality as an analytical tool. While the former is useful insofar as it helps describe the "real interlocking of different forms of oppression", viewing intersectionality as an analytical tool within a

“postmodern political agenda is problematic, since it is associated with a number of neoliberal projects, which, for example, mainly focus on questions of balanced political representation” (Mendívil & Sarbo, 2022, p. 108). Building on this distinction, concepts like ‘womanhood’ or ‘blackness’ are not prescribed in theories of intersectionality as part of a constantly changing class society, but as an ultimately static position of oppression. Analyses of class that follow this approach often lack a real analysis of class relations and instead stop at the claim to increase appreciation for poor people (Kemper, 2021). This then offers the starting point for an idealistic and positivistic approach to identity; these concepts only have to be assigned positive connotations, according to the liberal concept of intersectionality in order to stop discrimination against specific groups. In this case, the relationship between capital and labor underlying the oppression remains invisible (Mendívil & Sarbo, 2022). Intersectionality views class and its relations as a form of individual identity, rather than a social relation. Hence, intersectional critiques of discriminations based on class, often called ‘classism’ leads to a reductionist “understand[ing of] social inequality and cultural differences within the class of wage-earners as class differences” (Nehring, 2021, p. 179; Translation provided by the authors). This understanding shifts the origin of class relations from the substructure to the superstructure, thereby further obscuring the material origins of them (Nehring, 2021). Following this, intersectionality sees class as an identity “that is constituted by experiences” and in contrast to this, in a Marxist sense, class is not merely an identity, it is “the social relation, which ensures the production and accumulation of capital” (Mendívil & Sarbo, 2022, p. 110; Translation provided by the authors). The internal logic of intersectionality does not sufficiently pose the question of how the wage workers differentiate further through the increased division of labor and thus develop different experiences. This means that the identity categories, which are listed alongside each other as different dimensions of discrimination within intersectionality theory, can only express their positionality within class society within the materialist analysis. Gendered and racialized violence and experiences of oppression are not essentialist characteristics (as for example Afro-pessimistic positions suggest for Blackness), but rather the expression of a certain, violently determined and historically specific position within class society.

Class analysis is, thus, able to incorporate and moreover differentiate between objective relations of social materiality and constructions founded on this very structure. Addressing literature critiquing the SDGs through Marxist class analysis, using its extensive focus on capitalism, could, therefore, provide a comprehensive analysis of what social structures the SDGs support, how they facilitate and maintain contemporary power relations, how resistances

to globalization and sustainable development are formed, and on what basis, and, thereby, also a critical view where critiques might fall short when not considering the broader societal context, capitalist structures, the inherent power asymmetries within it and the effects this has on class structures. In this study's perspective, intersectionality as an observational tool fulfils specific useful functions, while the authors do not adhere to intersectionality as an analytical tool to explain the origins of gendered and racialized class relations. That is why this study has decided to incorporate materialist class analysis into its perspectives on the SDGs.

While class analysis functions as the wider framework of the analyses of social relations within class society, Feminist critiques of this analysis have developed into SRT, that focuses on the re-production process in capitalism. We see SRT as an important addition to class analysis, not just within the scope of this study. The following sub-chapter will explore SRT in detail and link it to the SDGs.

Social Reproduction Theory and the SDGs

In the literature review of critiques of the SDGs we found numerous studies which employed intersectional and feminist approaches to understanding the SDGs. These critiques primarily focus on how the SDGs interact with gendered and racialized structures of oppression, inequality, and representation. In order to better understand how the SDGs interact with social power relations in the world, we find it important to employ a theoretical framework to understand the underlying dynamics and power structures which oppression and inequality arise from. SRT is a useful tool to understand how capitalism reproduces itself as well as the specific conditions of different class positions within capitalism and how the SDGs can function as a catalyst for such reproduction. The insight SRT provides into the dynamics of gendered reproductive labor is an important theoretical framework to understand how class and gender along with other factors intersect and produce the conditions for women in society. Therefore, this theoretical perspective demonstrates the necessity of analyzing how the SDGs impact and aim to change the organization of care and reproductive labor and the re(production) of labor power across the world. Additionally, this perspective is important to critically engage with critiques of the SDGs which aim to scrutinize the SDGs' approach to intersecting social dynamics. Hence,

“SRT, [...] insists that our understanding of capitalism is incomplete if we treat it as simply an economic system involving workers and owners, and fail to examine the ways in which wider social reproduction of the system—that is the daily and generational reproductive labor that occurs in households, schools, hospitals, prisons, and so on—sustains the drive for accumulation” (Bhattacharya, 2023, p. 2)

SRT has its origin in Karl Marx's critique of the capitalist mode of production, and its inherent governing drive towards capital accumulation. It is a Marxist-feminist set of theories that focus on the everyday life, the reproduction process, the unequal preservation, and advancement of life. Its main question is: If the labor of workers produces all the wealth of society, then who reproduces the workers (Mendivil & Vögele, 2022)? Hence, SRT sees social analysis solely based on an analysis of the production process as reductionistic and, rather, offers an understanding of labor that requires a holistic analysis of labor power within the broader social context as a commodity that is interwoven within larger social processes and activities that produce, sustain, and expand everyday life. This also entails analyzing the relationships and processes which facilitate the (re-)production of labor power and the creation and maintenance of the communities upon which all production and exchange rests (Gore & LeBaron, 2019). In the early 2000s, SRT started to focus on the entanglement between reproduction and production under conditions of neoliberal globalization and tried to theorize connections between crises, changes in state and governance forms, and the re-reprivatization of social reproduction (Gore & LeBaron, 2019). As the concept of 'reproduction' is based on the presupposition of there existing something which is being reproduced, the theory is preoccupied with the continuity, persistence, and repetition of capitalism, and how capitalism influences the relations through which it produces and reproduces itself (Weiss, 2021, p. 1).

Bakker and Gill define (2019) social reproduction as something that involves the processes, relations, institutions, and structures that create and sustain individuals, households, and communities, forming the foundation for production and power in the global political economy. It necessitates analyzing production, reproduction, and accumulation through a gender, race, and class perspective due to the ongoing gendered division of labor (Bakker & Gill, 2019). Thus, the theory offers a lens through which to analyze the integral role human labor has in relation to the creation and reproduction of capitalism and society as a whole, even though societies' human and material components are continually undergoing change (Bhattacharya, 2023; Weiss, 2021).

Tied to social reproduction theory, the labor theory of value (LTV) is a theory on the creation of value in an economy, that assumes that the value of a good or service is determined by the total amount of socially necessary labor required to produce it (Marx, 1990). Following LTV's logic, Bhattacharya & Vogel (2017) see labor power as unique because of the fact, that despite it not being produced and reproduced by capital, it is fundamental to capital's own circuit of production. In SRT, this is attributed to a second circuit of production, one in which capital's circuit of production is directly tied to the process of the labor power's individual self-

reproduction and self-transformation. This second circuit of production happens outside the direct circulation sphere of capital, when people consume commodities as use values, for example, food, clothing, housing, or pursue their own needs or goals, for instance, education and intellectual development. This is because their needs “cannot be realized within the capitalist production process, for the process as a whole exists for the valorization of capital and not the social development of labor” (Bhattacharya, 2023, p. 18). Therefore, in this process of self-reproduction and self-transformation, the intrinsic dynamics of capitalism will always-already reproduce the worker as lacking in needs, thus leading to a struggle for higher wages and class struggles (Bhattacharya, 2023).

SRT, thus, adds another analysis to a specific circuit of social production.

“In Capital Marx does not theorize this second circuit, but simply notes that ‘the maintenance and reproduction of the working class remains a necessary condition for the reproduction of capital’ and that ‘the capitalist may safely leave this to the worker’s drive for self-preservation and propagation’ (Bhattacharya & Vogel, 2017, p. 80); Bhattacharya and Vogel’s quotes are found in Marx (1990, p. 718)

Therefore, modern SRT seeks to address and proceed from the research gap in orthodox Marxist analysis, to expand and examine fault lines in the reproduction of capitalist society. Such fault lines include, for example, how women and domestic work has a role in maintaining current workers and non-workers, and the theory also explores the “crises that emerge with respect to care work and livelihoods as finance becomes the main motor of accumulation” (Weiss, 2021, p. 1). Bhattacharya & Vogel (2017), highlight how the kin-based unit of the nuclear family has historically been the most enduring site for the reproduction of labor power, as the family plays a focal role in biological reproduction, since it produces the next generation of the working class, while also reproducing the existing working class through food, shelter, and physical care, which leaves the working class ready for a new day of work. The separation of the sphere of production and the sphere of reproduction is facilitated through the unit of the nuclear family and is a historically specific phenomenon of capitalism (Meißner, 2020). This social reproductive work within the household is still primarily perceived as the work of women, and these prevailing gender norms have detrimental effects on the lives of women, as it, among other things, oppresses and provide limitations to women’s ability to participate on the labor market, while also neglecting and undervaluing the social reproductive work of women, which points to inability of the capitalist systems to reconcile gender inequality (Rai et al., 2019).

As such, SRT offers a methodology through which one can explore labor and labor power in order to reach a diverse understanding of how the dynamics of capitalism influences social relations, and its primary concern is to understand how the production of surplus value coproduces categories of oppression, for instance, gender, race, ableism, etc. “In this aspect, it seeks to overcome reductionist or deterministic representations of Marxism while at the same time creatively exposing the organic totality of capitalism as a system” (Bhattacharya, 2023, p. 14). Therefore, SRT offers a more holistic view on how capitalism reproduces structural dynamics, by addressing how the circuit of production of value and the circuit of reproduction of labor power might be spatially separated, but are theoretically and operationally united (Bhattacharya, 2023; Weiss, 2021).

SRT is especially useful to this project, as it can be used to analyze the SDGs as shown by Rai et al. on the example of SDG 8. They show that even though SDG 8 encourages ‘sustainable economic growth and decent work for all’, by emphasizing GDP and per capita growth as indicators of progress, it does not address the value and costs of unpaid social reproductive work carried out by primarily women (Rai et al., 2019).

World-System Theory

Conditions of contemporary capitalism

From a macro sociological perspective, World System Theory seeks to explain the dynamics of a capitalist world economy. Developed by Immanuel Wallerstein, World System Theory provides a framework for understanding change and the relationship between the different parts of the global system. Through this framework, world-systems are existing of a single division of labor that unifies the structure, and multiple cultural system that is not bound by a single unitary political structure where production and exchange of goods and materials are essential for the functionality of everyday life (Chirot & Hall, 2023; Wallerstein, 2004). Within the modern world system, a capitalist system, endless accumulation is a central and continual dynamic and one which the system gives priority to. This means that anyone who acts in accordance with the system’s priorities will be rewarded and anyone who acts in disobedience risks being penalized and socially excluded (Wallerstein, 2004).

A capitalist world-system is constituted of a plethora of institutions, all interconnected and created in the framework of a capitalist world-economy, which make up the system’s processes. On a macro level the central institutions are the markets, the companies that compete within the markets, the multiple states in the interstate system. On a micro level and within the

interstate system, it is made up of the households, classes and status-groups (Wallerstein, 2004).

Key to Wallerstein's World System Theory is the axial division of labor, which describes a relational concept of production in the capitalist world-economy that is divided into core and periphery products which refers to the degree of profitability in the production process (Wallerstein, 2004). Core-like production processes refer to those that are in control and in the legal possession of the majority of the means of production, hence, those able to accumulate the most capital. This can also be referred to as quasi-monopolies, as these contain the leading products or control leading industries in the market. Quasi-monopolies are dependent on financial support from strong states and a concentration of quasi-monopolies are therefore often located in strong states, who also take up the majority of core-like production processes. Consequently, this creates a polarization that sees peripheral-like production processes being disproportionately dispersed between a large number of states. Peripheral-like production processes refer to the most competitive products and the weakest position in the axial division of labor. When exchange occurs, peripheral products (weak position) and core products (strong position) exemplifies a sustained flow of surplus-value from peripheral producers to core producers (Wallerstein, 2004).

Polarized Capitalism and Development

Historical and contemporary models of development are often variants of modernization theory. The central idea here is that poorer nations can 'catch up' with the North based on treading a similar path of development as the states in the core. The development in the core is understood as having "occurred through 'internal' shifts: the revolutionary activity of capitalists, the industrial revolution, advances in agricultural productivity, and widespread innovation and technological diffusion" (Ajl, 2023b, p. 2). The creation of European capitalist states is thus understood as being an 'internal' process which emerged independent of colonialism and thus expanded afterwards because of an imminent logic essential to capitalism. Many scholars have challenged the interpretation of scholars often treating colonialism as something to be added to existing theoretical frameworks of capitalism rather than being integral to analyses of capitalism.

Instead, Bhambra (2021) views colonialism as a necessary condition for the emergence and history of capitalism and thus argues for a transformed theoretical apparatus which views both as co-constitutive. To argue the centrality of colonialism in the emergence of capitalist agriculture in Europe, Bhambra (2021, p. 310) refers to Wallerstein's assertion that the

appropriation of lands overseas was “fundamental to improving the land-labor ratio for Europeans and also made possible [...] ‘the large-scale accumulation of basic capital which was used to finance the rationalization of agricultural production’”. We can thus understand Wallerstein’s World System Theory as an attempt to overcome the Eurocentric and binary logic of viewing capitalist development in the capitalist core as an ‘internal’ process operating independently of ‘external’ colonial processes.

The idea that poorer nations could undertake the same path of development as the Euro-American states and Japan to ‘modernize’ was first challenged by many pointing out that the wealth, commodities, and labor appropriated through the slave trade, laid the foundation of British industrialization (Williams, 2014). Additionally, in the decades after WW2 some intellectuals noticed that goods from the Third World, or the periphery of the world system, suffered from declining terms of trade: “one bushel of coffee might trade for one automobile in 1920, and then three bushels of coffee might trade for one automobile in 1940” (Ajl, 2023a, p. 2). Unequal exchange was developed as a formalization of the idea of declining terms of trade and became part of a broader analysis of how some nation-states could develop while some remained underdeveloped. So, in addition to unequal exchange, a range of factors characteristic to the imperialist world-system of this 20th century were identified as constituting and re-constituting the polarized pattern of development and underdevelopment existing as two sides of the same coin. We will employ the world-system perspective to situate the SDGs within the polarized pattern of development within the structure of the world-system by paying attention to the ideas and means of development which the SDGs promote.

These factors include military violence, colonization, monopoly pricing power and later the monopoly control of intellectual property together with the centralization of technology, coercive loans and debt repayments, land theft, and the extirpation of native manufacturing capacity (Ajl, 2023a). Meanwhile in the core of the world system, a range of factors such as strong currencies and imperialist-aligned unions, constituted a social compact which provided a decent living for some workers (Ajl, 2023a).

According to Foster and Holleman (2014, p. 204-205), unequal exchange became a generally accepted part of World System Theory as Immanuel Wallerstein argued that “‘unequal exchange’ develops from a quasi-monopoly system involving ‘politically strong’ core states and their economically strong corporations” thus extending the analysis of unequal terms of trade to account for the central role of monopoly capital in this structure. The Egyptian economist Samir Amin synthesized the theoretical contributions of Dependency Theory and World Theory by theorizing unequal exchange as an ‘imperial rent’ resting “on the fact that

the differences in wages between center and periphery are greater than the productivities, allowing extensive capture by the center economies of value created in the periphery” (Foster & Holleman, 2014, p. 205).

Samir Amin pointed out how this uneven capture of value stemming from wage inequality, unequal rates of surplus value, and higher profits in the periphery than the center, was accompanied by and should be understood in the context of what he referred to as increasingly ‘generalized monopolies’ (monopolistic multinational corporations) which increasingly employed the same technologies worldwide, resulting in a tendency towards equality in productivities (Amin, 2019; Foster & Holleman, 2014).

From this perspective we can understand how trade inequities combine with other forms of surplus extraction from the periphery to produce difference in wages between center and periphery which are greater than the difference in productivities constituting super exploitation of peripheral labor. This allows “extensive capture by the center economies of value created in the periphery” which “embodies the fundamental characteristic of all unequal economic exchange: the exchange of more labor for less” (Foster & Holleman, 2014, p. 205).

Ecologically unequal exchange and class

These insights provided the foundation for the theory of ecologically unequal exchange (EUE) which shows how uneven accumulation or uneven flows of value has been intersecting with harmful flows of environmental use-values and grabs of shared commons (Ajl, 2023a; Althouse et al., 2023). Whether state-of-the-art critiques relate the SDGs to the uneven patterns constituted by EUE will be examined in the analysis. EUE can be understood as a development of earlier theories of unequal exchange and essentially shows how the Global North is responsible for the use of a disproportionate amount of world resources and space for waste as well as atmospheric space for CO₂ emissions (Ajl, 2023a; Althouse et al., 2023). People in the Global South are therefore subject to more social and ecological destruction than people in the North in addition to being more exploited. Both the economic and ecological aspect of unequal exchange are thus constitutive of imperialism as a hierarchical world economy dominated by monopolistic corporations and a few states in the core (re-)producing exploitation of the periphery while restricting migration from subjugated nations. EUE cannot be accounted for with a single indicator because it enfolds many phenomena and because it is fundamentally concerned with qualitative and incommensurable issues of environmental degradation and injustice (Althouse et al., 2023).

However, much empirical research on EUE looks at multiple dimensions of resource imbalances in trade which can be estimated by current available data, including labor time, energy, biodiversity, and green house gas emissions as manifestations of ecological inequalities (Althouse et al., 2023). The findings of EUE almost always relate to periphery-core value flows, however, there are problems with inferring exploitation or value transfer from e.g. tabulations of commodity exports (Ajl, 2023b). Unequal tonnage in material flows of trade would imply that the US is being exploited when it exports wheat, even though “wheat export, using massive hectares, is a component of imperialism through establishing import dependence and political control over Third World development” (Ajl, 2023b, p. 27).

EUE is therefore not a universal theory of the ecological consequences of imperialism and needs to be elaborated together with value theory, a class perspective, and thought of as part of the structure of monopoly capitalism. Ajl (2023b, p. 27) states that “[i]mperialism concerns net surplus-value transfer between national capitals, and the project of primitive accumulation, domination, and destruction inherent to stabilizing global value flows”. A major cause of the ecological consequences of the imperialist world system is the unequal use and access to the non-human ecology, which is often, but not always, captured by the balance of exchange of natural resources. However, apart from trade balances, another important aspect of EUE deals with ecological damages, but to fully understand the class dynamics of this process, an understanding of the capital relation as a social metabolism is necessary.

Capitalism and Ecological Crisis

With the emergence of capitalism, proletarianization in the core was accompanied by widespread wastage and destruction of humans and non-human nature in the periphery. This destruction has been theorized as a process of ‘waste’ which constitutes part of the creation of value and capital accumulation. Historical capitalism both wastes life and treats social natures as ‘free gifts’ to appropriate and destroy as endless inputs into production. Thus, the human-environmental metabolism of capitalism proceeds through a fundamentally unecological process of waste and therefore has a tendency to produce ecological crisis (Ajl, 2023b; Konicz, 2020; Moore, 2015).

In addition to recognizing the falseness of the idea of a radical separation between humans and non-human nature, it is important to recognize that the natural/ecological conditions for human life are (re-)produced by de-valued and non-remunerated labor, especially in the periphery. The idea of an untouched nature appropriated by capital is therefore also false as we must recognize this as social nature which has been constituted by human labor meaning that capital is

appropriating labor time when it appropriates social nature. In historical capitalism, accumulation has advanced through the ‘waste’ of humans and non-human nature in the periphery which creates a process of constant under-reproduction of the natural conditions of human life. Moore (2015) pointed out the role of non-human nature in constituting value and demonstrated the imperialist cheapening and lack of payment for peripheral social nature.

Ajl (2023b) explains how this happens through various methods of imperialism including the lack of environmental protection imposed on peripheral countries which decreases constant capital cost and socially necessary labor time resulting in the cheapening of social nature. So, peripheral working classes pay a higher social ‘price’ for surplus value creation, hence why LTV can give us insights into the class dynamics of the empirical findings of EUE (Ajl, 2023b). To elaborate, working and peasant classes in peripheral countries which rely on nature for social reproduction in more direct ways are far more affected by the under-reproduction of nature than their internal ruling classes and the working classes of the capitalist core. This gives us certain insights into the class dynamics of EUE which its focus on national aggregates cannot.

Social Reproduction in the World System

Social reproduction theorists have emphasized the prioritization of care-work as an important part of a necessary ecological transition. For over half a century Marxist-feminists have highlighted the social labor activities necessary to reproduce the commodity which has fueled the struggle against the devaluation of such activities. According to Ajl (2023a), much contemporary work focuses on re-production, which is a form of social labor, but “is often presented absent [from] a world-systemic class analysis” (p. 4). Instead, we will employ a frame of worldwide social labor that attempts to account for how, within the world system, the socially necessary labor undertaken by populations in the periphery is devalued and unpaid, while their conditions of social re-production are continuously degraded and undermined (Ajl, 2023a). Without an anti-imperialist perspective grounded in a world systemic analysis then, these perspectives are not helpful for challenging the political architecture of the current world-system. For example, certain ‘technology-neutral’ care-based transition proposals do not recognize and clarify the form of political defense of patterns of social reproduction which is needed against technologies which imply encroaching on commons (Ajl, 2023a). Another aspect of the imperialist world order is the structuring of global migration which leads to the appropriation of social wealth from peripheral societies (Ness, 2023). For example, as a class offensive against domestic workers, the US employed Filipina nurses in the 1990s and 2000s

whose labor power was created on land and labor in the Philippines. Today the US has 15 nurses per 1000 people while the Philippines has 5 which indicates that the development of US healthcare is intertwined with the underdevelopment of healthcare in the Philippines (Ajl, 2023a).

In the neoliberal era the growth of the surplus population, especially in the Global South, has deepened the reliance on unremunerated gendered labor, necessary for the reproduction of human life (Ajl, 2023a). The labor of often female peasant and working classes in the periphery is thus under-reproduced as monopoly capital captures increasing value from their labor, meanwhile these classes remain a crucial component of the social reproduction of nature on a world scale. EUE makes it clear that, the Global North uses far more of the world's resources than the South, the North is generally responsible for the ecological crisis, and the North and South experience ecological damage in acutely different ways (Ajl, 2023a). An analysis of the imperialist world system shows us the polarized nature of capital accumulation on a world scale and suggests that putting an end to the global destruction of environmental balances needed for human life requires breaking from worldwide capitalist exploitation and expropriation. Furthermore, this analysis suggests that certain social layers of the subjugated peoples of the Global South, particularly the semi-proletariat who rely on land for social reproduction, “will play the leading role in asserting popular control over politics, production, and the human-nature metabolism” (Ajl, 2023a, p. 3). This is the principal goal of eco-socialism (Foster, 2023) and will be necessary to accomplish decent and ecological appropriate work for all across the world in a green transition toward a non-hierarchical world-system. According to Foster (2023), rational social planning of the human-ecology metabolism is necessary to overcome the permanent ecological crisis of the capitalist world system. To achieve this, the question of ‘delinking’ remains central. Delinking means that countries in the periphery aim to undertake a path of economic development outside of the global domination of the law of capitalist interest, “that is to say, the refusal to submit national-development strategy to the imperatives of ‘globalization’” (Amin, 1987, p. 435). One such approach, according to dependency theory and World System Theory, is “to follow an autonomous, independent path of development based on socialism” (Du Pisani, 2006, p. 88). Additionally, this highlights the importance of the struggle for national liberation from neocolonialism and the domestic bourgeoisie, as struggles for political and economic control take place amongst imperialist subjugation of entire social formations (Ajl, 2023a). This perspective, which emphasizes the problem of imperialism and significance of revolution in the South, problematizes many dominant policy frameworks and policies, e.g. the shift to renewable energy which is imagined as an investment

arena for Northern capital. The Wall Street Consensus constitutes a condition in which states in the Global South offer risk guarantees for Northern capital to construct green infrastructure in the South while maintaining flows of profit and technological control (Ajl, 2023b; Gabor, 2021). A range of other processes included in the dominant frame of the ‘green transition’ will rely on imperialist exploitation, e.g. the majority of raw materials needed for a green transition are located in historical neocolonial hot zones (Ajl, 2023b). It is clear that theories sidestepping the unevenness of the world-system will reinforce or deepen its polarized structure. Moreover, theoretical perspectives and agendas cannot sufficiently engage with the social demands of peripheral working classes, emanating from the conditions of the imperialist world-system, if they fail to theorize or acknowledge South-North power relations. How the state-of-the-art critiques of the SDGs relate them to the dynamics of social reproduction within the world-system will be examined in the analysis.

The following chapter will present how this study will apply the laid-out theory and present the empirical findings of the systematic review.

Methodology

Operation of Theory

In operationalizing the theoretical framework, this study embarks on a systematic review to identify and analyze the extent to which existing critiques of the SDGs incorporate or neglect class perspectives. The Marxist theoretical lens will be employed to discern the presence or absence of class-based analysis in these critiques, thereby revealing potential areas where future research could start incorporating the under-researched class perspectives. Moreover, this study also allows identifying biases in the current academic perspectives on SDGs.

The primary focus will be on how existing critiques address or overlook the dynamics of class structures and capitalist hegemony within the SDGs. The review will assess whether these critiques adequately consider the role of class in the formulation, implementation, and outcomes of the SDGs. This includes scrutinizing the ways in which SDGs may perpetuate class disparities, reinforce capitalist structures, and influence the allocation of resources and opportunities. Furthermore, adopting a critical perspective on contemporary intersectionality theories, the study will examine how intersectionality in these critiques engage with the interplay of class, race, gender, and geographical location. Having successfully demonstrated that class position differs from other dimensions of discrimination at a fundamental (objective material relations) level in the mechanisms of constitution, an updated and more precise

analysis of overlapping expressions of social position in historically-locally specific circumstances can be applied. In this way, precise proposals for future research can be identified at key points in the analyses examined. This aspect is crucial in understanding whether the critiques of SDGs sufficiently address the diverse impacts of sustainable development policies across different social strata and regions, especially in marginalized and vulnerable communities. The authors want to highlight that we use both the terms ‘working class’ and ‘poor people’. We emphasize that while these are often-times used interchangeably, they are two different analytical and observational categories. The objective social relations that determine one’s position within the relations of production correlate with income, there is not necessarily a causal link: Poor people are often-times, but not qua definition, working class, and working class people are not necessarily poor. Whenever this study talks about poor people, it is referring to a reviewed study’s analytical category.

Additionally, the review will explore the ecological dimensions of these critiques. It will analyze how they tackle the environmental implications of the SDGs, especially from a class-based viewpoint. The focus will be on whether these critiques address the environmental costs of capitalist production and consumption patterns and their disproportionate effects on the Global South and economically marginalized groups. In conclusion, this study aims to illuminate the gaps in existing critiques of SDGs by systematically examining their engagement with class perspectives, thereby contributing to a more holistic and inclusive discourse on sustainable development.

In order to understand how class dynamics occur along imperialist lines within the world system, we use the world-systemic framework to understand the material context which the SDGs exist within. SRT allows us to both understand how social reproductive labor takes different forms within the core and periphery as well as understanding how the reproduction of the world system could be reinforced or threatened by the SDGs. Moreover, understanding how unpaid social labor undertaken by, for example, semi-proletarians in the periphery is part of the value relation in capitalism, can allow us to understand the imperialist process of monopoly capital capturing value from labor in the periphery. This analytical insight is important to understand how the types of policies promoted by the SDGs can impact workers undertaking reproductive labor in the global South. Additionally, EUE allows us to understand the link between a polarized economic system and uneven vulnerability to and destruction of ecosystems in the Global North and South and how this might be impacted by the SDGs.

Having addressed the theoretical framework, which this study will utilize to analyze and draw out class-related struggles in relation to the critique of the SDGs in the-state-of-the-art literature, the following will address our methodological approach.

Method of literature of review

This research utilized two different approaches to identify relevant studies. First, the authors employed databases for systematic search of relevant studies. The search criteria included only articles written in English published in peer-reviewed journals between January 2021 and November 2023 which featured either ‘SDG*’ or ‘Sustainable Development Goal*’ in their titles, abstracts, or keywords, as well as critique related search words such as ‘criti*’. All search queries and their numerical results are detailed in Appendix 1. The overarching inclusion criterion for studies was to conduct a critical examination of the SDGs, either individually or as a whole. The databases used to find relevant articles laying out critiques of SDGs were the ProQuest social science and political science databases, as well as SCOPUS. Additionally, the registers of EBSCOhost (all its databases) and the Danish Royal Library (KB) were used to identify articles relevant for later screening. The presented findings are reproduceable following the aforementioned databases, registers, search query filters, and search queries in Appendix 1.

In the beginning, a total of 579 records were identified through the search queries. Pre-screening exclusion criteria removed records because of duplicate findings ($n = 125$), records not being articles ($n = 25$), and records being published before 2021 ($n = 2$). During the screening process, the quantity of studies that remained ($n = 427$) was greatly decreased to 126. To reduce the subjectivity of record screening, the authors randomly selected 33.1 % ($n = 100$) excluded records and re-evaluated them; none ($n = 0$) re-qualified. Following this, only seven (7) out of the 125 analyzed studies were not available to the authors of this research and, therefore, were not included in this study, reducing the total number of studies to 119 for further in-depth analysis. Out of the 118 remaining articles, 72 were excluded and organized into five exclusion groups that indicate the reason for their exclusion, leaving 46 included studies in the analysis of this identification approach (10.8 % of all unique identified records).

Our second identification approach included author-stalking ($n = 16$) and citation searching ($n = 35$) of already identified studies during and before the research for this systematic review. Duplicates of records already identified in the first identification approach were disregarded and thus not counted. This provided another sample for identification ($n = 51$). Before the attempted retrieval, 30 records that were published before 2021 were removed as well as one

(n = 1) non-journal entry, leaving 20 remaining records. Ten (n = 10) out of those were not available to the authors of this research, reducing the number of records to ten (n = 10). Out of those remaining records, six (n = 6) were excluded and organized into the aforementioned exclusion criteria, leaving four (n = 4) included studies in the analysis of this identification approach. The total number of studies included in this review is hence 50. Table 1 shows all included studies sorted by year. Appendix 2 shows the excluded studies grouped into their respective exclusion criteria including their full references.

Articles were included if they critically examined the SDGs, either as a whole or individually. Furthermore, beyond the aforementioned inclusion criteria we developed open thematic groups and approach groups. Hence, the analytical groups are an empirical result occurring during the screening process.¹ The thematic groupings signify the primary subject matter in relation to the SDGs discussed in the studies. The approach groups in this study signify the approaches employed to analyze the topic and/or the SDGs. The included studies are sorted by their respective theme and approach in table 2 und table 3 in appendix 3.

Table 1 Included studies sorted by year

2021; n = 11	2022; n = 27	2023; n = 12
Akestoridi & Seatzu, 2021; Fahed & Daou, 2021; Fonjong & Gyapong, 2021; Griffiths, 2021; Haustein & Tomalin, 2021; Hope, 2021; Ijjas, 2021; Okeke, 2021; Olwig, 2021a; Olwig, 2021b; Perry, 2021	Alexander et al., 2022; Annan-Aggrey et al., 2022; Brockwell et al., 2022; Butcher, 2022; Caria, 2022; Eger et al., 2022; Galbiati et al., 2022; Glyptou, 2022; Halliki & Aigner, 2022; Hope, 2022; Immler & Sackers, 2022; Krause & Tilker, 2022; Krauss, 2022; Larsen et al., 2022; Mariano & Molari, 2022; Mutung'u, 2022; Rajani & Boluk, 2022; Rocha de Siqueira & Ramalho, 2022; Roy et al., 2022; Santos & Mourato, 2022; Taggart, 2022; Telleria & Garcia-Arias, 2022; Tichenor et al., 2022; Vijayarasa & Liu, 2022; Vogt, 2022; Voulvoulis et al., 2022; Ward et al., 2022	Amanuma et al., 2023; Arora-Jonsson, 2023; Choudhary, 2023; Das & Albinsson, 2023; de Castro & Yu, 2023; Frank & Mattioli, 2023; McIlwaine et al., 2023; Moreno et al., 2023; Nagati et al., 2023; Novovic, 2023; Vaitsman et al., 2023; Vu & Long, 2023

The step-by-step process of study identification is also visualized in the PRISMA flow diagram for systematic reviews based on Page et al. (2021).

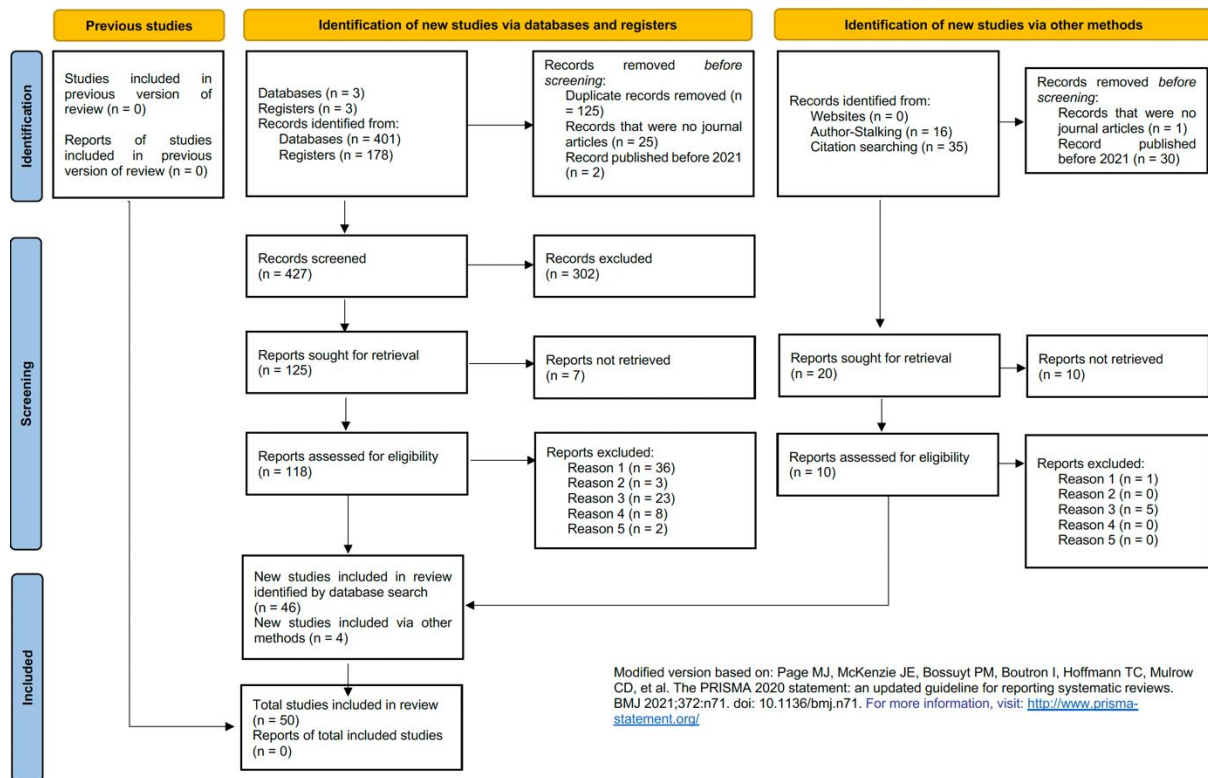


Figure 1 Modified PRISMA diagram showcasing the identification, screening, and inclusion process of the literature review.

During the screening process, thematic groups describing the content focus of the respective studies were first created, while groupings along analytical approaches were formed in parallel. The combined grouping along a methodological and a content dimension based on the empirical findings enabled a more in-depth analysis in the next step. Since the focus of this study is based on the methodological approaches of the studies reviewed (whether and how studies include class perspectives), the approach groups were taken as the primary starting point for analysis in the final screening process. The thematic and methodological groups then ultimately changed in the analysis process, resulting in the following three main groups for the analysis: (1) SDGs lack localization, (2) SDGs de-politicize, and (3) SDGs continue colonial power relations.

In the next chapter, the found studies will be organized and reviewed along these groups.

Literature Review

This analysis navigates through the landscape of state-of-the-art SDG critiques, employing a methodological approach that focuses on the identification of class perspectives within academic literature. The significance of this approach lies in its potential to unravel the important role socio-economic classes play in the implementation of sustainable development. Class, as a fundamental element of social structure, influences access to resources,

opportunities, and the capacity to engage with the SDGs. Understanding how different classes interact with and are impacted by the SDGs is paramount for crafting policies and social communities that are not only equitable but also effective.

As we delve into each perspective, we will draw upon specific critiques from seminal works, notably the contributions of de Castro and Yu (2023). This study serves as an example, showcasing how a comprehensive class analysis enriches the evaluation of SDGs. By applying the insights gained from this analysis to other identified studies, we aim to elucidate the potential contributions and limitations of existing critiques.

This analysis is a step towards addressing a crucial gap in the research surrounding SDGs. While sustainability discussions have traditionally centered around environmental concerns, the class perspectives provide a holistic understanding of the socio-economic dimensions embedded within these goals. The overarching goal is to underscore the need for a systemic and structural analysis that not only critiques but also offers pathways towards a more inclusive and effective sustainable development agenda.

Class perspectives onto Sustainable Development Goals

Through a theoretical framework based on the theory of commodity-form of law developed by Evgeny Pushakanis and drawing on the historical roots of International Law in European imperialism, de Castro and Yu (2023) critically inspects the close interplay between sustainable development, International Environmental Law, and capitalist power dynamics. Even though their study engages with the SDGs and raises concerns that they are the result of a commodification of sustainable development, which at its core is purely a concealment of capitalism in the legal form, it is not the SDGs per se that is scrutinized in the study. Rather, the study takes a broader systemic perspective in a bid to decolonize sustainable development by addressing that capitalist power dynamics constitute the cornerstone of international law. It is based on capitalist ideologies which consequently serves as the foundation for the superstructure allowing developed countries to perpetuate their colonial ventures, in which developing countries are subordinated and exploited under the guise of sustainable development (de Castro & Yu, 2023).

Following Marxist legal philosophy, de Castro and Yu identify the legal connections between imperialism as the purpose of undermining the class struggle. Law plays a codifying and fetishizing role here: on the one hand, it externalizes social relations to an abstract level and, on the other, it naturalizes these relations in the concrete normative state system. In this sense, law justifies both colonization and underdevelopment of sovereign states by overdeveloped

states, as well as disguises class struggle in meta-narratives of cooperation, universalism, and (sustainable) development, while advancing the continuous expansion of monopoly capital (de Castro & Yu, 2023, p. 2).

The concealment of capitalism under disguise of sustainable development, has nevertheless become a necessity for the ruling classes to veil the contradictions and tensions tied to pursuing capitalism's ontological growth imperative while at the same time raising claims of preserving and protecting the environment. The concealment is necessitated by the extraction of nature's resources, that are required for the production of commodities to be exchanged, leading to the destruction "of wildlife, global warming and climate change, and aquatic resource degradation" (de Castro & Yu, 2023, p. 11). The capitalist ideology is concealed in the SDGs under terms such as 'green growth' or 'sustainable development', while being institutionalized in the form of goal 8, which prescribes economic growth based on the measurements of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), even though economic growth has been a source of inequalities. In this sense, SDG 8 also de-politicizes growth. It raises it from the structural necessity of a specific mode of production to a form of 'natural law of economics' – which is an expression of commodity fetishism. It describes the inversion of social relations of people into a relation between commodities. SDG 8 is such an inversion: It raises the substructural growth imperative to a deified relation of commodities.

As such, resting on the ontological ideologies of capitalism, sustainable development has developed into a capitalist fetishism, which represents the device that capitalism utilizes to sustain its expansion and accumulation, despite it creating environmental destruction and economic inequality (de Castro & Yu, 2023). Backed by powerful international organizations, whose decisions and policies are leading to the advancement of interests held by core-actors, sustainable development has been institutionalized in International Environmental Law and has become "a commodity to be sold to those needing development", thus enabling the continuation of imperialist states to colonize developing countries through subordination and exploitation (de Castro & Yu, 2023, p. 8). This process

"reinforces what Karl Marx called the metabolic rift, which describes the separation between ecological and economic systems caused by unsustainable resource use and the resulting environmental degradation concealed in sustainable development" (de Castro & Yu, 2023, p. 10)

which simultaneously leads to the alienation of labor and worker, because it is a commodity, represented through sustainable development, which dominates economic and law relationships (de Castro & Yu, 2023).

Opening class discussions in state-of-the-art SDG critiques

The following subchapters will provide an extensive overview about the reviewed literature. The shared thematic approaches to critiques of the SDGs are laid out and set into a wider context, that connects the different arguments and perspectives. This opens up this study's starting point for the analysis and provides a general overview of approaches and perspectives of state-of-the-art critiques of the SDGs. The de Castro and Yu (2023) study will serve as a useful orientation point to set other SDG critiques into the wider framework of class analysis. In the next chapter, this study will expand upon this class analysis by contributing its own perspectives utilizing the aforementioned theoretical framework.

SDGs lack localization

Many articles argue; the SDGs are an advancement in terms of localizing the global development agenda compared to the MDGs, but they should do more to implement them sub-nationally at both regional, municipal, and neighborhood levels (Annan-Aggrey et al., 2022; Butcher, 2022; Das & Albinsson, 2023; Fahed & Daou, 2021; Frank & Mattioli, 2023; Galbiati et al., 2022; Haustein & Tomalin, 2021; Immler & Sakkers, 2022; McIlwaine et al., 2023; Mutung'u, 2022; Novovic, 2023; Vaitsman et al., 2023). Additionally, it is frequently argued that there are significant problems with how the SDGs measure and work with local contexts stemming from their modes of governance and their universalist agenda.

Most of the studies concerning inclusion and implementation of the SDGs, deal with the question of the challenge between the global agenda of the SDGs and their translation into local implementation, specifically at the example of indicators. Brockwell et al. (2022) reiterate critiques of the current approach to indicator design for SDG target 4.7 which relates to education for sustainable development. In particular, the authors highlight three problems with SDG target 4.7; "a lack of agreed definition, an inference about the required knowledge and skills to be expressed as learning outcomes, and a de-politicizing narrative that masks a need for systems-level transformation" (Brockwell et al., 2022, p. 2). While the study acknowledges the need for systems-level transformation it does not go further in analyzing what this might entail. However, Brockwell et al. (2022) propose that an 'Inside-Out' approach to indicator design defined as an inductive, intersubjective, and values-based approach might help partially overcome these issues. According to the authors, this means that the design process starts from within communities rather than from an externally imposed agenda and thus challenges traditional top-down modes of evaluation, which is a similar suggestion to Frank & Mattioli

(2023). Cohering with the perspective of Frank and Mattioli (2023), Galbiati et al. (2022) propose the production of municipal indicators as a strategy to better apprehend local realities. Additionally, Vaitsman et al. (2023) argue that the implementation of SDGs related to the demands of Indigenous Peoples is hampered by the lack of localization of agenda 2030.

Like the other studies focused on localization of the SDGs, Annan-Aggrey et al. (2022) have an overall positive view of the SDGs' ability to further inclusive development. However, Annan-Aggrey et al. (2022) also identify a problem of scale concerning the synergy of the SDGs at local levels. To address this problem, the authors suggest that 'communities of practice' can accelerate progress towards the attainment of the SDGs. They describe 'communities of practice' as involving "groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly" which they see as crucial to develop a strategy for collaboration to achieve interdependent SDGs (Annan-Aggrey et al., 2022, p. 274).

Seeing a problem with the SDGs' focus on member states at the national level and a lack of attention to how SDGs interact with local social imaginations, Immler and Sakkers (2022) take a shift away from the language of implementation by arguing for "a move away from the dominant implementation approach towards a translation one (foregrounding culture and human rights) to enable more reciprocity between the local and the global" (p. 262). Immler and Sakkers (2022) thus argue that localizing SDGs should not be a process of what they deem 'top-down' implementation characterized by technocratic, hierarchical, and centralized procedures but instead a process of translation characterized by relationality, connectivity, and de-centering. According to the authors, centering culture and human rights in the SDGs can be part of facilitating the process of people determining the meaning of SDGs in their everyday lives which they consider necessary to realize "the transformative potential of these global goals" (Immler & Sakkers, 2022, p. 276).

The aforementioned lack of local perspectives in SDG indicators are critically examined by Novovic (2023). They employ a similar critique of the global development paradigm historically; however, they have a positive view of the ability of gender equality advocates to challenge traditional paradigms of global development within the context of Agenda 2030 because of how it enables cross-sectoral and multi-stakeholder exchange. Novovic (2023) identifies the kind of gender advocacy made possible by the 2030 Agenda as constituting an emergent strategy dubbed 'gender mainstreaming 2.0' which "is embedded in and contributes to new paradigms of global cooperation that valorize local gender expertise and national ownership" (Novovic, 2023, p. 1058). Roy et al. (2022) argue for an intersectional gender

approach to climate change adaptation and the goal of gender equality (SDG 5). The article states that an intersectional approach views gender as being mediated by other social vulnerabilities for example resulting from how class and race are structured by their relation to enclosure, exclusion, encroachment, and entrenchment which often distort post-climate-disaster-relief. This structural constraint is recognized by Roy et al. (2022) but they do not develop this analysis further as the aim of the study is not to understand how gendered power relations are organized but instead how climate adaptation impacts gender equality. Akin to Mariano and Molari (2022), Novovic (2023) puts forward a positive perspective on the ability of the SDGs to promote valorization of local experiences of gender inequalities but maintains a critical perspective by arguing that the achievement of the SDGs remains heavily limited by finance, as also laid out by other reviewed studies (Mutung'u, 2022; Perry, 2021). Ijjas (2021, p. 6) defines the socio-economic system of the world as 'capitalist-patriarchy' which "is based on the limitless 'resourcing' of women and nature" and explains how the covid 19 pandemic led to increased exploitation of women. Social reproduction and natural resources are seen by Ijjas (2021) as exploited in similar ways. To explain the gendered structure of this system, they suggest that challenging gender domination, requires the abolition of the institutionalized hierarchical separation of so-called 'productive' labor, historically associated with men and paid and 'caring' activities, often unpaid and performed mainly by women. Because of this, Ijjas identifies a necessity for transformational change to realize the SDGs related to gender equality. Because the inequality of women is permeated through many aspects of a patriarchal system and "eventually deep structural transformation is needed", they suggest that the goal of gender equality (SDG 5) will "get even farther away, unless science and policymaking start to work on a deep structural transformation" (Ijjas, 2021, p. 8).

Similarly, Butcher (2022) argues that the SDGs' move towards localization offers significant potential towards creating more equitable outcomes for the urban poor – an approach which is edging on a class perspective. While also discussing structural conditions of inequality and the idea that the focus on measurement and benchmarking within global development can mask the deeper structural drivers of poverty, Butcher (2022) argues that a relational reading of the SDGs can help us understand their internal contradictions and how people interact and shape its universal agenda locally. Further, a relational ethos to orient the SDGs "offers the potential to guide decision- making, planning and policy – to foreground the concerns of equality and the aspirations of peripheralized communities – towards a transformative agenda" (Butcher, 2022, p. 28). Yet, Butcher's analysis of class stays well within the issue of perception. While the structural problems of capitalism are mentioned within the framework of Southern Urban

Theory, a materialist class analysis could have prevented Butcher's analysis from the problems of intersectional class analysis mentioned in the theory chapter of this study. Class, here, is treated as just another identity, akin to race and gender, while an analytical examination of the different constituting processes of these identity groups and what this entails was missed.

McIlwaine et al. (2023) reiterate the critiques of the SDGs' ability to achieve inclusive development resulting from reliance on governance through quantitative indicators and thus overlooking localized experiences of gender inequality, following the thematic approach by Mariano & Molari (2022) and other criticisms of the quantification of sustainable development. Attending to this problem McIlwaine et al. (2023) propose a system of counter-mapping local experiences of gender violence to make women and girls protagonists in telling their own story. This can help reporting, highlighting, and resisting patterns of violence against women and girls within local contexts. Even though the study examines people from "disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds", the class perspective is completely absent here (McIlwaine et al., 2023, p. 1). Only a reference to the intersection of race and the above-mentioned economic background indicates an awareness of the existence of class structures and their influences.

SDGs de-politicized sustainable development approach

A reoccurring theme in the reviewed literature is a systemic critique of the integration of capitalist and neoliberal ideologies into the SDGs framework, despite these ideologies exacerbating the challenges which the SDGs are attempting to solve (Akestoridi & Seatzu, 2021; Caria, 2022; Fonjong & Gyapong, 2021; Griffiths, 2021; Halliki & Aigner, 2022; Larsen et al., 2022; Olwig, 2021b, 2021a; Santos & Mourato, 2022; Vu & Long, 2023). It is argued that by relying on finance, economic growth, or voluntarism the SDGs aim to solve problems through technical means while ignoring the political struggles and conditions which are the root causes of the problems they aim to solve. As Akestoridi & Seatzu (2021) argue, development is continually being evaluated and measured through a neoliberal lens, thereby making economic growth the primary measurement of progress in the 2030 Agenda, thus lowering the importance of human and environmental development to being goals of secondary concern.

Such critique is echoed by Olwig (2021a; 2021b) and Santos & Mourato (2022). For instance, Olwig (2021b, p. 1) stresses that the increased integration of business entities and NGOs into the Global Development of the "SDG framework has institutionalized a central role for businesses in development, and business has played a key role in formulating the SDGs". Furthermore, due to businesses being primarily driven by capitalist incentives, such as

accumulating surplus value, Olwig (2021b) argues that by integrating businesses into the framework of the SDGs, corporate capitalist interests and ambitions are leveraged to a position of prime importance thus granting great bargaining power to businesses. Through the SDGs framework businesses are offered an institutional platform through which they can exercise this power and simultaneously disguise their capitalist motivation through social washing, by selectively pursuing and circumventing particular goals (Olwig, 2021b). Following from this, Olwig (2021a) argues that through the way of how the SDG framework promotes partnerships between business entities, NGOs, IGOs, and states, it in turn obscures responsibilities as well as removing social transformation from the direct reach of democratic participation. In general, this is part of a larger, neoliberal trend of transferring governance onto markets.

Fonjong & Gyapong's (2021) study on the implications associated with plantation investments on food security, based on the impacts of various plantation schemes in Cameroon and Ghana, can be seen as a testimony to the SDGs serving as a medium for businesses to social wash their agendas and pursue their own capitalist interest under the disguise of sustainable development, while triumphing over the interest of the intended beneficiaries of development projects. From an agrarian political economy perspective, with a focus on SDG 2, target 2.3, and SDG 5, Fonjong & Gyapong (2021) document the inherent contradictions and tensions regarding the narratives of sustainable development and the projects that are supposedly potential pathways to the SDGs.

“Plantation investments can achieve local food security when it is intentionally designed to benefit the rural working poor, but this hardly happens in Africa. Following the evidence from Ghana and Cameroon, the land acquisition of smallholder farmlands and forest for plantation has led to displacement and relegation to marginal lands, reduced food production and exploitative wage labor conditions, thus low incomes” (Fonjong & Gyapong, 2021, p. 9)

Additionally, Fonjong and Gyapong (2021) show that when customary lands are integrated into the capitalist land markets through surges in large-scale land acquisitions, they not only exacerbate already existing inequalities, but also give birth to new forms of control. These dynamics are especially to the disadvantage of women, as they “lose their existing benefits from land, e.g. for food production and other monetary benefits” (Fonjong & Gyapong, 2021, p. 2). Similar to Perry (2021) and Das and Albinsson (2023), Fonjong & Gyapong (2021) criticizes the underlying capitalist interest in the SDGs coupled with challenges in policy, institutional, and governance inadequacies, as well as the need for better empowerment of small farmers, and especially women. de Castro and Yu (2023) can help us go a step further by analyzing the structural conditions of the SDGs and thus the reason why they are coupled with

capitalist interests by understanding the SDGs as forming part of a legal superstructure which serves to perpetuate (over-)exploitation of developing countries.

As such, the literature argues that the SDGs leave the structural causes of poverty and unequal development unaddressed, which only sustains the contradictive power dynamics that has crafted the poor-rich divide. However, not only has the current neoliberal perspective on development led to unequal power relations and the poor-rich divide, but the inherent capitalist and neoliberal ideologies also has contradictive effects in relation to environmental sustainability, when analyzed as a system of dynamics (Akestoridi & Seatzu, 2021; Griffiths, 2021; Halliki & Aigner, 2022; Vu & Long, 2023).

The literature addressed so far resonates with the critique raised by de Castro & Yu (2023) in relation to the institutionalization of neoliberal and capitalist ideologies in the SDGs. Yet, to go a step deeper and scrutinize the structural power dynamics that enforce neoliberal and capitalist agendas, a Marxist inspired perspective on law, as implemented in de Castro & Yu (2023), could have complimented the studies to show how law is used as a commodity and as a tool in capitalism to disguise class struggles, colonialism, and the destruction of nature, under the fetishism of sustainable development.

Larsen et al. (2022) criticize the SDGs for disregarding the necessity to engage development as a political challenge. They question and criticize the implementation mechanisms and SDGs as they do not call for political action, but instead feed into a narrative of win-win scenarios, thereby evading the questioning of structural challenges and hiding underlying power asymmetries. The SDGs' promise of a system-wide, financial, economic, and political transformation is argued to instead provide a new vocabulary to legitimize development dispossession and inequalities through new ways of accumulating capital, thus the SDGs serve merely as a distraction from radical change (Larsen et al., 2022). Their critique of the SDGs correlates with Caria (2022), who views the SDGs as merely an attempt by the UN and multilateral institutions that constitute the traditional cooperation regime to maintain legitimacy, as the framework still adheres to Western interests. According to Caria (2022), the SDGs promote global macroeconomic models that neglect peasant organizations, as well as other marginalized groups, and call this the result of the construction of the neoliberal project since the 1980s, which it also serves to ratify, wherein ecological issues are neglected. The SDGs underestimate the real causes of sustainability challenges as they fail to assess the underlying causes of poverty, discrimination, and inequality (Caria, 2022).

However, even though the studies reviewed in this sub-chapter do point to structural power dynamics, resulting from the integration of neoliberal and capitalist ideologies into the

framework of the SDGs, the articles rarely propose other solutions than taking an intersectional approach to understanding the dynamics that lead to inequalities or taking political action – hence, posing no suggestions for policy changes, or systematic challenges. In a bid to go beyond such suggestions, the articles would have benefitted by implementing de Castro & Yu’s (2023) perspective on law as a commodity and the fetishism of sustainable development. Through such perspective, the studies would have been enabled to illuminate how capitalist modes of production is so ingrained in the SDGs and International Environmental Law that it serves as a tool for capitalism to maintain the substructure, that produces and reproduces the very exploitation and subordination, that the SDGs seek to eradicate.

SDGs preserve colonial power relations

Some of the studies we found point out how the SDGs are grounded in western and neoliberal ideology (Akestoridi & Seatzu, 2021; Arora-Jonsson, 2023; Caria, 2022; Mutung’u, 2022; Perry, 2021). Because of the SDGs’ universalist and apolitical approach and promotion of neoliberal globalization and development they reproduce the rhetoric of modernity and can thus be seen as an extension of the project of ‘modernization’. Arora-Jonsson (2023) attends to this issue by arguing that the SDGs are an extension of a universal development agenda grounded in western and neoliberal ideologies. From a post-development perspective, they point towards a historical link between ‘enlightenment’, ‘scientific universal knowledge’, the legacy of colonization, and imperial domination. Additionally, they critique the universal assumptions built into the SDGs for being based on Western-driven models. Taking inspiration from de Castro and Yu (2023), Arora-Jonsson’s (2023) critique could be increased in its breadth by a focus on class and class struggles. By linking Arora-Jonsson’s (2023) historical critique of western-driven models to the institutionalization and commodification of sustainable development, a class focus could highlight how the SDGs are not merely an extension of colonial and imperial domination. It could also result in an analysis of the western universal development agenda that subordinates and exploits countries in the Global South, but also functions as a strategy for maintaining North-South class structures.

The emphasis on finance is critiqued as both inadequate in achieving the SDGs and as an actual hindrance as it potentially furthers the problems which the SDGs aim to solve. According to Mutung’u (2022), the SDG-framework is a top-down approach created by former colonial powers and businesses that propagates coloniality. Furthering their critique, Mutung’u (2022) raises concerns about the SDGs lack of attention to colonialism and patriarchy as these are viewed to be root causes of inequality. Therefore, the SDGs are argued to be constructions of

new colonialities that, through reliance on finance, neglects needs and values on a local level and, on a national level, strengthens the debt-based bond between former colonial powers and the colonies (Mutung'u, 2022). Like Mutung'u's (2022) focus on patriarchy and colonialism as being a root causes of inequalities and its linkage to the SDGs, Perry (2022) criticizes SDG 17 for furthering financialization which they see as deepening extraction of profits from racialized communities. Instead, they argue that climate reparations are an appropriate “philosophical and policy apparatus for first understanding the magnitude of climate breakdown, and second for mounting a response to ongoing environmental harm in vulnerable countries that is centered on climate justice” (Perry, 2022, p. 1). Helping to broaden this analysis, de Castro and Yu's emphasis on the SDGs role of expanding the domination of monopoly capital, as it would allow us to understand the particularities of colonial power relations at play.

The power asymmetries between donor providers and recipients in the development sector is highlighted (Akestoridi & Seatzu, 2021; Perry, 2021). For example, as part of their critique mentioned in the section above, Akestoridi and Seatzu (2021) argue that the neoliberal policies inherent to the SDGs prioritize the accumulation of wealth at the expense of human and environmental development, that is, at the cost of environmental degradation and unaddressed structural causes of poverty and unequal development, which sustains the power relations of the poor-rich divide. As they already propose a more holistic approach to and understanding of development, a class perspective could provide an understanding of how the power relations of the poor-rich divide, that is colonial power relations, are being upheld and legitimized through sustainable development as a strategy for subordinating countries in the Global South to sustain the continuous expansion of monopoly capital (de Castro & Yu, 2023). To sum up, the false universalism of the SDGs can be seen as an imposition and reinforcement of colonial hierarchies of knowledge and thus marginalizes, invisibilizes, and devalues Global South epistemologies. The SDGs can be seen as both protecting and asserting the hegemony of the US and the cultural hegemony of capitalism and western modernity.

Analysis: Class as a gateway for sustainable development critique

In the following chapter, the argumentative analysis of the reviewed studies introduces a class perspective and expands the analytical perspectives. In this respect, the analysis can also be seen as a starting point for future research.

Class analysis as an expansion of already existing critiques

Firstly, to follow up on the arguments of Brockwell et al.; applying a level of class analysis to the critique that SDGs lack clearly communicated goals, as well as targets might offer valuable insight into questions regarding how the specifically bourgeois ideology is reproduced besides the material relations in the SDGs. Accordingly, this also makes it clear which learning objectives in SDG 4 are implicitly set when the class context is taken into account. The reproduction of the bourgeois state and, correspondingly, of bourgeois ideology also takes place in education. Taking the opposing class interests and the complicated particularities within classes into account, analyses of SDG 4 could show how the SDGs constitute a continuation and intensification of ideological relations of the bourgeois ideologies. Moreover, the specific class interests at play in development and implementation of the SDGs severely limit possibilities if not outright makes it impossible to incorporate fundamental ideological changes, such as degrowth perspectives, within the framework of the SDGs.

Following onto this and building on the basis of Vaitsman et al., a class analysis could marry local specificities with global similarities: While the specific local situations might require vastly different, maybe even contradicting outlooks onto sustainable development, globally an increased class consciousness might help re-politicize sustainable development, since class identity transcends and rejects categorization efforts based on ethnicity, nationality, or ‘culture’.

Taking a step back, a class-infused perspective could, at this point, differentiate between two things: Whether belonging to a certain group is the result of objective material relations or of subjective superstructural relations. While the first group is formed on the basis of its relationship to the means of production and the entire (re-)production process, the second group specifies details based on the *Bewusstsein* within the substructure. The application of a historical materialist analysis to the conditions and contradictions of historically-locally specific subgroups within class society could lead to the development of certain political and social visions and plans in coordination or differentiation from the SDGs. A proposed solution to localization and self-efficacy issues was formulated by Annan-Aggrey et al. (2022). Those, unfortunately, do not manage to move onto a concrete level: The ‘communities of practice’ are vague both in wording and conceptually and thus do not represent a possible framework for orientation that meets concrete localization requirements – even for the SDGs. Despite them mentioning interest groups as possible foundation criteria of ‘communities of practices’, Annan-Aggrey et al. miss the opportunity to refer to the social group with objective social

relations to which specific interests are intrinsically linked: Class. The ‘communities of practice’ could be worker-organized, grassroots democratic groups with a claim to local transformation, which at the same time form a global community, which would remove the level of vagueness and already constitute a specific shared political goal. Within this global ‘community of practice’, the specific dispositions would then have to develop and be worked out on the basis of analyses. For example, critiques such as those formulated by Roy et al. (2022) break down the complexity of exploitation and discrimination, but they ultimately reduce class to just another identity category such as gender or race. The particular dispositions of groups within classes could build on the foundation of contemporary analyses that center class-gender relations (Mendívil & Vögele, 2022; Notz, 2020; Sorger, 2020), or on those that center class-race relations (Mendívil, 2022; Sarbo, 2022). Analytically, materialist analysis helps by incorporating the criticisms of intersectional approaches and by allowing for more precise definitions of social dispositions that can be traced back to particular social contexts. The focus on local self-organized groups of shared material interest allows for the much-needed localization of sustainable development, especially since contemporary critiques rightfully point out that SDG implementation over-relies on nation-state actors compared to sub-national actors (Haustein & Tomalin, 2021; Immler & Sakkers, 2022; McIlwaine et al., 2023; Vaitsman et al., 2023) or formulated critiques of homogenization through the SDG’s universalist approach (Freistein & Mahlert, 2016; Rai et al., 2019; Scheyvens et al., 2016; Sultana, 2022; Vandemoortele, 2018).

At the same time, one could expand the approach by Haustein and Tomalin’s (2021) analysis then: They claim that in order to achieve the SDGs it is imperative that the SDG framework relies more on civil society organizations (CSOs) including those that are faith-based communities mirroring Fahed and Daou (2021), which is applied similarly by Das and Albinsson (2023) regarding Indigenous Peoples communities. This is precisely where class-based studies and practices could open the very channels of dialog that Fahed and Daou (2021), for example, envisioned as interreligious dialog. In order to facilitate this dialog in the first place, increased awareness of shared positions within the relations of production constitutes a necessity to develop shared political goals, such as sustainable development requires. Building on this understanding of one’s position within the relations of production, ‘communities of practice’ should be understood similar in function, origin, and political ideology to worker collectives – while the latter is coupled with a concrete social analysis including a call for political action.

The working approach with regard to the inclusion of religious groups for the regional specification of the SDGs is commendable and could be further developed in the context of a class analysis. Building on observations about the role of CSOs, including faith-based groups, in the SDG implementation process, new perspectives could explore how these entities intersect with class struggles and ideologies within the SDG framework. Utilizing SRT and class theory, an analysis of how these organizations contribute to or resist the reproduction of class structures and inequalities would highlight intersections of class, religion, gender, and ethnicity and develop specific policy interests and concrete shared struggles based on this observation. It could also examine how their involvement in the SDG process reflects broader class dynamics and power relations, potentially offering a critical perspective on the role of non-state actors in global development agendas.

As Akestoridi & Seatzu (2021) argue, development is continually being evaluated and measured through a neoliberal lens, thereby making economic growth the primary measurement of progress via the GDP in the 2030 Agenda, thus lowering the importance of human and environmental development to being goals of secondary concern. Parallel to these, analyses of corporate influence on sustainable development and implementation that specifically look at the SDGs are lacking. While for example criticisms of financialization (Bernards, 2023) or private business' influence on SDG development (Scheyvens et al., 2016) incorporate systematic analyses and critiques of sustainable development in general, some studies presented in this review (Akestoridi & Seatzu, 2021; Caria, 2022; Halliki & Aigner, 2022; Santos & Mourato, 2022) lack a fundamental perspective on the extent to which neoliberal policies transfer governance to market structures and thus remove it from the direct democratic sphere of influence (Olwig, 2021a). Beyond this, however, there is surprisingly little awareness in the reviewed studies of the extent to which the fundamental structure of the SDGs leads to said transfer. Studies that observe this process of power transfer outside of the SDGs more closely (Egger, 2022; Gore & LeBaron, 2019; Koenig-Archibugi, 2019) could be included in the theoretical framework of future studies of sustainable development to further explore the wider dynamics of neoliberal capitalism and sustainable development.

Meanwhile, critiques of SDGs' measurement through GDP are not adequately laid out and come short in viewing the complex situations and performances of the (re-)production process. GDP boils the diverse and multifaceted experiences of numerous people into a single quantified unit of measure which inevitably reduces complexity (Rai et al., 2019). For example, SDG 8, its indicators and targets fall short of taking social reproduction into account. The quantified indicators mostly include the GDP as a unit of measure for progress, this neglects unpaid care

work as well as other forms of informal labor. Accordingly, SDG 8 fails to make an intersecting analysis and implementation of class-gender perspectives and what role they play in the production and reproduction process (Rai et al., 2019). Female empowerment in the SDGs is perpetuated and used as a vehicle to continue capital accumulation. This severely limits the SDGs and other global or sustainable development programs operating under the growth paradigm in their potential to sustainably and reliably transform social relations and foster social change. This criticism of quantification processes and their normative powers (Fukuda-Parr, 2016; Fukuda-Parr & McNeill, 2019; Kapto, 2019; Merry, 2019; Olwig, 2021a) are powerful tools to enhance perspectives onto the SDGs.

Common to the literature that takes a broad and systemic approach to the SDGs, is the argument that by ignoring the historically specific social relations which produce inequality, ecological crises, and oppression, and instead relying on technical adjustments to achieve their goals, the SDGs de-historicize and naturalize these problems, and the SDGs arguably even aggravate the problems they attempt to solve, as they can be seen as strengthening and reinforcing the structures which produce these crises. This expresses itself concretely in the SDGs reliance on economic growth and private finance to simultaneously solve poverty, inequality, and environmental crises. Attempting to balance the interests of privately owned businesses, workers, and local communities ignores the fundamentally antagonistic forces of the global economy which cannot be reconciled following the current economic model.

In this regard, the Marxist-feminist inspired approach ‘women and development’, as described by Mariano and Molari (2022), could be beneficial to address and challenge the structural dynamics which shape and maintain the international division of labor, where the working class is exploited and subordinated by the bourgeoisie. This could serve as an opportunity to address the unequal hierarchical relations between men and women¹, as women, other than being pivotal labor power in relation the productive sphere of society, also bears the burden of being the primary labor in relation to social reproduction (Mariano & Molari, 2022; Notz, 2020; Sorger, 2020; Wecker, 2020).

¹ While the authors of this study acknowledge the existence and validity of gender identities beyond the binary, binary categories of analysis are appropriate within the examination of hegemonic mechanisms of reproduction that produce these categories in the first place. For example, only binary gender perspectives can be found in the SDGs. However, a detailed examination of the gender-related reproduction of capitalism through the SDGs is not provided for in this study.

Analyzing the top-down approach of the SDGs through an intersectional and class perspective could also give a critical assessment of the negotiation process and how it neglects colonial and gender power imbalances, which could help build a strategy for including gender and class perspectives in the decision-making process and thereby also in the SDGs. Additionally, a class perspective could further link capitalism and imperialism and, thereby, highlight how the SDGs disguise capitalist power dynamics.

The SDGs in the World-System

We have highlighted that a class perspective in recent literature concerning the SDGs has been missing. In order to understand how class dynamics are shaped along imperialist lines, we argue that World System Theory could be instructive. A world-systemic frame of analysis can allow us to understand polarized patterns of accumulation between core and periphery and its socio-ecological consequences. While this frame is also useful to understand the role of semi-peripheral countries in the global economy such as China, India, and Brazil, a focus on this is beyond the scope of this study. As we have argued in the theory section a world-systemic class analysis attentive to imperialist dynamics of EUE and dispossession or primitive accumulation in the South should aim to understand the specific conditions of social reproduction in the periphery. Social reproductive labor in the periphery contributes to accumulation on a world-scale and is both exploited by capital and wasted through the destruction of life and social nature which is part of the value relation (Ajl, 2023b). The conditions of life of people in the periphery which rely on social natures for unpaid subsistence are thus continuously undermined by imperialist exploitation. This speaks to the class interests of subjugated populations in the periphery which have a material interest in the destruction of the imperialist world-system and national liberation from neocolonial subjugation (Ajl, 2023b). From this perspective, we can also understand the lack of internationalist commitment in the working class of the core, for example expressing itself in imperialist-aligned unions allied with their domestic capitalist class in the global North (Ajl, 2023a).

In order to understand the consequences of the SDGs, we need to understand them in the context of the dynamics of the world-system which we have outlined. Larsen et al. (2022) criticize the SDGs for being a mechanism of capitalism by relying on techno-fixes to fix problems which are caused by capitalism. They argue that practices of dispossession and land grabbing may be enabled and aggravated by the SDGs because of the reliance on concepts such as green growth and neoliberal policies. Larsen et al. (2022, p. 25) conclude by offering considerations for alternative sustainability agendas and argue that in the long run “a radically

alternative well-being agenda has to replace the SDG framework”. However, the authors do not acknowledge the difficulty in achieving such an agenda in an imperialist world-system. The question of class-struggle and revolution is also ignored in favor of relying on social-ecological movements to build bargaining power and thus omits an analysis of how socio-ecological struggles are necessarily grounded in class formations, as well as the question of socialism.

Additionally, Fonjong and Gyapong (2021) criticize SDG 2 for promoting corporate-led agricultural investments which lead to increasing food insecurity and dispossession of rural working people in much of Africa. They explain that particularly in West Africa, small scale and family farming systems depend significantly on women’s labor. Consequences of land acquisitions for multi-national corporations (MNCs) thus disproportionately affect women and leads to “displacement and relegation to marginal lands, reduced food production and exploitative wage labor conditions, thus low incomes” (Fonjong & Gyapong, 2021, p. 9). Like Larsen et al. (2022), Fonjong and Gyapong (2021) do not mention imperialism, however, and therefore do not offer a theory of how dispossession occurs along imperialist lines (Moyo et al., 2012). While the empirical findings are important, the authors omit the fact that the places they focus on, which are vulnerable to dispossession of land such as Cameroon, are vulnerable because they are under imperialist subjugation by the core. These findings should speak to the fact that accumulation of dispossession is a central feature of imperialist exploitation and occurs unevenly in the core and periphery and, thus, is an important factor in how monopoly capital captures value from the periphery. This dispossession both depletes sources of social reproduction and constitutes appropriation of social wealth embodied in lands which have been constituted by social labor (Ajl, 2023b). Fonjong and Gyapong (2021, p. 10) conclude that it is crucial that “national food self-sufficiency take precedence over capitalist-driven export-oriented schemes which often siphon off local resources”, however, the study does not address the imperialist attacks which countries aiming to instate such programs for self-sufficiency face. Thus, the article does not sufficiently go beyond a national-level sociology for a world-systemic analysis necessary to understand the structural barriers which constrain countries’ attempts of achieving self-sufficiency in food, and thereby does not shed light on the political defense needed to protect political projects of self-sufficiency in peripheral states (Ajl, 2023b). While Fonjong and Gyapong (2021) prioritize food security over food sovereignty, an analysis of imperialism can show the fundamental relationship between food security and sovereignty. So, the connection between accumulation of dispossession and the SDGs have received attention in recent critical studies of the SDGs but their connection to the imperialist world-

system should be analyzed further. Additionally, questions concerning forms of struggle against neocolonialism and for development through socialist projects delinked from the dictates of global capitalism remain central here and deserve greater attention in forthcoming studies.

Das and Albinsson (2023) criticize the SDGs neoliberal agenda of marketization and privatization as well as the focus on the role of nation-state, corporates, and an agency-wielding civil society in relieving poverty through Public Private Partnerships. This agenda is seen as further marginalizing the voices of Indigenous Peoples, the poor and subaltern. Indigenous Peoples are especially seen as marginalized within this framework as their political sovereignty is undermined by the framework of the nation-state. Because of this, Das and Albinsson (2023) explore how Indigenous Peoples undermine the values of the dominant global market which they argue is spread by the SDGs. However, as the article aims to understand the agency of Indigenous Peoples in subverting dominant values as well as struggles for representation, it fails to deliver a thorough analysis of the material struggles of Indigenous Peoples and their respective position within class society. Focusing on the role of the labor needed for the social reproduction of social nature, disproportionately undertaken by Indigenous Peoples in the form of preservation work, can be a starting point for a class analysis of Indigenous struggles. Additionally, a materialist analysis should recognize the suppression of Indigenous sovereignty within the nation-state and can help us understand the centrality of struggles over land for Indigenous Peoples (Slater, 2019). The struggle for taking land back should thus feature in an analysis of how the lives of Indigenous Peoples are being undermined by neoliberal agendas in the SDGs. Coupling this with a world-system perspective, it can provide a basis to connect struggles around extractive processes with other anti-systemic struggles against monopoly-capital. Das and Albinsson (2023) point out the insufficiency of the SDGs for the poor. However, the question of what an environmentalism of the poor could look like must be grounded in a class analysis of the world-system.

SDGs, Migration, and Imperialism

While there was one study which talks about migration (Santos & Maurato, 2022), not a single study connected migration with imperialism in its analysis of the SDGs. We view this as a significant gap in state-of-the-art critiques of the SDGs. SDG target 10.7 on migration policies “calls on countries to facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies” (United Nations, n.d.). Orderly and regular migration is a condition of the global

division of labor of the imperialist world system. SDGs thus further the agenda of controlled migration which is part of how monopoly capital with the core states are able to continuously exploit the periphery. So-called 'irregular' and 'unorderly' migration happens as a result of unequal exchange in the world system and the undermining of the conditions of life in the periphery through imperialist war, EUE and climate change (Ness, 2023). As explained in the theory, a factor of imperialism is the migration of workers whose labor power is produced in the periphery. Especially, EUE and imperialist-fueled economic growth causing climate destruction is expected to lead to massive surges in migration in the coming decades. EUE is absent in the state-of-the-art critiques of the SDGs. According to UN-affiliated International Organization for Migration (IOM), the climate breakdown will most likely cause up to 216 million people to migrate (IOM, n.d.). As climate migration threatens the structure of the world-system, states in the core react with border controls, walls, and violence to restrict this irregularized migration. The SDGs with target 10.2 thus play an enabling role in countries' efforts to restrict and control migration flows. While restricting irregularized migration is central to the maintenance of the imperialist world-system, the use of controlled migration has been central to imperialist exploitation as explained in the theory section. As theories of unequal exchange point out, the (over)development of the core relies on the underdevelopment of the periphery. This partly happens because of countries in the Global North facilitating migration of workers from peripheral countries which are beneficial for the economies of the core like e.g. highly educated labor within specific important sectors. Many labor hours and thus social wealth have been used to create the labor power of these workers and their migration often correlates with the lack of workers within the same sectors in the country of origin. The SDGs take part in this process through its support of restrictions to migration while promoting the 'regular' and 'orderly' migration which is useful for accumulation in the core. To properly understand both migration within the periphery and from periphery to the core of the world-system, it is essential to understand how the world-system unequally produces surplus populations in the Global South through dispossession. As we have argued, the SDGs can worsen the process of dispossession from people in the periphery as the means of production are seized by monopoly capital in the form of MNCs. This is why it is crucial when addressing the SDGs to situate them in the global class structure and world-system to examine how they take part in maintaining and reproducing the dominance of bourgeois and core interests. We have argued that the reviewed studies lack a thorough analysis of how the SDGs relate to class and imperialism. Because of this gap in the literature, we have provided tentative analysis of how examinations of the SDGs could approach this from a world-systemic and class

perspective. Following this, we will connect some of the common issues which we argue have been present in the systemic critiques of the SDGs.

SDGs and Power Structures

It has been a common theme that the reviewed studies suggest that there are structural limitations to the achievement of many of the SDGs, however often without clearly defining or theorizing these structures (Brockwell et al., 2022; Immler & Sakkers, 2022; Mariano & Molari, 2022; Mutung'u, 2022; Novovic, 2023; Roy et al., 2022). Here, a general issue is the omission of capitalism and class relations. While some studies briefly touch on capitalism, they often do not develop a clear analysis of how capitalism impacts and structures issues related to the SDGs. We argue that an incomplete or superficial consideration of capitalism is not able to fully map problems that are due to capitalist relations. However, the issue here is not just capitalism in general, but how colonial power relations, which are repeatedly brought up, are theorized separately from capitalism. Thoroughly understanding how the SDGs exist in a context of an imperialist and capitalist world-system is important to understand what kind of processes are needed for the change the SDGs imagine.

De Castro and Yu (2023) go a step further to understand why the SDGs exist in the first place by employing a materialist analysis to international law. However, they conclude by proposing that sustainable development policies and practices should decenter business interests and incorporate diverse perspectives of the marginalized as well as inclusivity principles. Proposing that the SDGs exist as a part of a superstructure which furthers the subordination and exploitation of developing countries while only proposing the implementation of inclusivity policies seems contradictory. If we consistently apply de Castro and Yu's (2023) analysis radical change will not occur as a result of the SDGs, but because of changes in power relations along class lines. As de Castro and Yu (2023) have laid out, the SDGs do not only exist within a system of domination, but they also themselves represent a specific power structure that is threatened by some of the suggested policies proposed in reviewed studies. Hence, as laid out by Olwig (2021b) and Scheyvens et al. (2016), business entities have not only been an essential part of the development of the SDGs they are also an outright part of their implementation. Private businesses in capitalism are subject to a profit imperative; this is also reflected in the many SDGs that take growing GDP as a metric for success. According to our analysis, the involvement of companies in the implementation of the SDGs and their compulsion to make profits, which is also reflected in the development and implementation structure of the SDGs, cannot pose a serious challenge to these structures. Accordingly, these structures do not provide

for the realization of alternative economic models (e.g., according to degrowth). The SDGs are a normative global development program that masks business interests in social and green language.

Nonetheless, de Castro and Yu employ a materialist analysis to understand the history of sustainable development and the SDGs but do not apply this same mode of analysis to understand how the SDGs might change in the future. The suggestions which are proposed by de Castro and Yu consequently mirror a common theme of the literature reviewed in this study – they do not go further than to suggest policies which aim to take into account structural inequalities. Questions of revolutionary change along with a class-analysis of the potential social forces which could bargain for the implementation of these policies remain unaddressed.

Limitations

This study, while offering a comprehensive analysis of the absence of class perspectives in critiques of SDGs, acknowledges inherent limitations in its scope and methodology. The first set of limitations is found in the identification and screening process of the study. One initial constraint is the language bias in the initial search criteria. By restricting the literature search to English-language sources, potentially fruitful analyses in other languages were omitted. The authors estimate the influence of this factor on the quality of the study as low, as the sheer quantity of English-language studies, in contrast to the neglected small number of studies in other languages, could presumably provide a comprehensive overview of state-of-the-art critiques of the SDGs. Still, this limitation bears the risk of narrowing the geographical lens.

Additionally, the study's reliance on specific academic databases and registers introduces a possible bias towards certain types of journals and publications. This database and register bias might skew the understanding of the full spectrum of SDG critiques, possibly overlooking significant contributions that lie outside these selected sources. To reduce the impact of database and register bias, we used three different databases and registers. Moreover, by excluding education-related queries, this study may have inadvertently limited insights regarding SDG 4, which focuses on quality education. During the identification process, it was decided to use the exclusion parameters for 'education', as initial searches revealed results that were at most marginally related to the SDGs and diluted the pool of potential studies.

In addition, the study's temporal focus also presents a limitation: Concentrating on critiques post-2020 may overlook earlier, potentially pivotal criticisms of SDGs that emerged soon after their inception in 2015. This oversight could be addressed in future research, either through a

systematic review of earlier critiques, by reviewing the whole body of critical literature since 2015, or by a meta-study analyzing reviews since the SDGs' inception, considering the changing global context, including the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has significantly altered global economic and social exchanges, what some have even called de-globalization, suggesting that critiques formulated pre-COVID might not be fully applicable to the current context. Furthermore, the screening process of our study also encompasses limitations. Despite efforts to maintain transparency and reduce subjectivity, such as re-evaluating a randomly selected subset of studies, the inclusion and exclusion criteria involved a degree of interpretation. This subjectivity potentially affects the reproducibility of our findings. As a way to mitigate this, Appendix 2 provides a detailed thematic overview and explanations for the excluded studies, enhancing transparency. Besides, the inability to access certain studies (n = 17) due to paywalls or other restrictions highlights an important challenge for academic work in general. The lack of access not only limits the study's comprehensiveness but also reflects the broader issue of restricted knowledge dissemination in academia, echoing the very class relations and structural maintenance of epistemic conditions this study seeks to critique.

Finally, our analysis may have omitted broader critiques of sustainable development that indirectly encompass the SDGs. Specifically, the exclusion of general sustainable development critiques and degrowth literature, which often provide structural critiques of the sustainable development and growth imperative, constitutes a notable gap. This oversight suggests that future research might benefit from a more inclusive approach, integrating these broader critiques to enrich the understanding of SDGs from a class perspective.

Conclusion and outlook

This study has provided an extensive overview of state-of-the-art critiques of the SDGs, grouped them according to their analytical and thematic approach and laid out a materialist analysis that builds the foundation for a) identification of research gaps and b) development of future research areas. The overall problem area initiating this research has been the question how existing critiques of the SDGs considered the interplay between class dynamics and the SDGs, particularly in terms of their role in addressing or perpetuating class-related concerns in capitalism. Based on RQ1 to RQ2b and their respective hypotheses H1 to H2b, we present the following conclusions C1 to C2b of this study:

- C1 State-of-the-art SDG critiques cover a wide array of thematic approaches. Lack of localization of SDGs was the biggest point of critique that laid out suggestions for improved targets and indicators. Closely linked to suggestions for improvement are critiques of top-down approaches in target, and indicator development, which finds expression in a call for increased localization of SDGs. An increase in de-politicization of sustainable development in general through the SDGs analytically functions as the bridge towards the critique of how the SDGs continue colonial power relations while at the same time naturalizing existing power structures.
- C2a While critiques of sustainable development as such were raised, they did not sufficiently situate sustainable development and the SDGs within the wider framework of capitalism. Some studies address dynamics of capitalism, yet they do not address the underlying institutionalization of capitalist ideologies thoroughly.
- C2b This study has shown that generally materialist and specifically class perspectives are fundamentally lacking in state-of-the-art critiques of the SDGs. Additionally, Colonial power relations are theorized in separation from capitalism, and hence not contextualized in the world-system. The underrepresentation of class perspectives in the reviewed studies is not made up by intersectional approaches that, if they mention class at all, do not work with the social category of class; except for one study. The reviewed studies provide perspectives on gender and race relations in the SDGs framework but fall short of situating them in the context of class relations.

Further research

We highlight the imperative for further critical research on the SDGs from a degrowth perspective to explore the problem of the 2030 Agenda's reliance on economic growth. The fundamental contradiction between the growth paradigm and sustainability should be a central component of critical perspectives on the SDGs.

We have identified the lack of theoretical engagement concerning the SDGs' role in the world-system particularly regarding the material realities of the people most negatively impacted by imperialism. Because of this, we stress the need for further research to engage with questions related to how the SDGs can negatively impact these populations as well as taking further into account the social demands emanating from these populations. With this outlook, we should, from a class perspective, centrally place questions related to the kind of social forces which could potentially bargain the UN for policies and development agendas that could be useful for

the populations oppressed and exploited by imperialism. As we highlighted in the theory section, the question of socialist development within the framework of ‘delinking’ could be a crucial factor in the emancipation from the world system, and the SDGs’ potential to benefit or impair this agenda should be explored further. Additionally, acknowledging the centrality of unequal exchange in the world economy, creates an imperative to examine if and how the SDG agenda could impact terms of trade between periphery and core.

To further engage in discussions on class, research could delve deeper into global and local class consciousness through the concept of ecological class developed by Latour and Schultz (2022). Since ecological class is a fairly new term that has yet to be fully defined engaging with it in a discussion on class consciousness could further the importance of class analysis to the global climate crisis. This could evoke class consciousness in a way where it becomes more apparent which struggles are important for countering imperial and capitalist modes of domination as well as their closely tied colonial legacies.

Bibliography

- Ajl, M. (2023a). Peripheral Labour and Accumulation on a World Scale in the Green Transitions. *Social Sciences*, 12(5), 274. <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci12050274>
- Ajl, M. (2023b). Theories of Political Ecology: Monopoly Capital Against People and the Planet. *Agrarian South: Journal of Political Economy: A Triannual Journal of Agrarian South Network and CARES*, 12(1), 12–50. <https://doi.org/10.1177/22779760221145232>
- Akestoridi, K., & Seatzu, F. (2021). Enhancing the Transformative Potential of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). *Global Jurist*, 21(1), 111–141. <https://doi.org/10.1515/gj-2019-0037>
- Alexander, A., Walker, H., & Delabre, I. (2022). A Decision Theory Perspective on Wicked Problems, SDGs and Stakeholders: The Case of Deforestation. *Journal of Business Ethics: JBE*, 180(4), 975–995. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-022-05198-8>
- Althouse, J., Cahen-Fourot, L., Carballa-Smichowski, B., Durand, C., & Knauss, S. (2023). Ecologically unequal exchange and uneven development patterns along global value chains. *World Development*, 170, 106308. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2023.106308>
- Amanuma, N., Zusman, E., & Langlet, D. (2023). The relationship between female and younger legislative representation and performance on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). *Environmental Research Letters*, 18(5). <https://doi.org/10.1088/1748-9326/acca96>
- Amin, S. (1987). A Note on the Concept of Delinking. *Review (Fernand Braudel Center)*, 10(3), 435–444.
- Amin, S. (2019). The New Imperialist Structure. *Monthly Review (New York. 1949)*, 71(3), 32–45. https://doi.org/10.14452/MR-071-03-2019-07_3

Bek, August; Brelage, Tristan; Pedersen, Casper Gjødvad; Roslund, Jon Ture

Annan-Aggrey, E., Kyeremeh, E., Kutor, S., & Atuoye, K. (2022). Harnessing “communities of practice” for local development and advancing the Sustainable Development Goals.

African Geographical Review, 41(2), 271–280.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/19376812.2021.1934498>

Arora-Jonsson, S. (2023a). The sustainable development goals: A universalist promise for the future. *Futures*, 146, 1–14. Scopus. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.futures.2022.103087>

Arora-Jonsson, S. (2023b). The sustainable development goals: A universalist promise for the future. *Futures*, 146, 1–14. Scopus. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.futures.2022.103087>

Bakker, I., & Gill, S. (2019). Rethinking power, production, and social reproduction: Toward variegated social reproduction. *Capital & Class*, 43(4), 503–523.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/0309816819880783>

Bernards, N. (2023). Where is finance in the financialization of development? *Globalizations*, 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14747731.2023.2222481>

Bhambra, G. K. (2021). Colonial global economy: Towards a theoretical reorientation of political economy. *Review of International Political Economy*, 28(2), 307–322.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/09692290.2020.1830831>

Bhattacharya, T. (2023). *1 Introduction: Mapping Social Reproduction Theory*.

Bhattacharya, T., & Vogel, L. (2017). How Not to Skip Class: Social Reproduction of Labor and the Global Working Class. In T. Bhattacharya (Ed.), *Social Reproduction Theory*

(pp. 68–93). Pluto Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt1vz494j.8>

Bouali, C. (2022). Jenseits des Klassenkompromisses. In E. R. Mendívil & B. Sarbo (Eds.), *Die Diversität der Ausbeutung: Zur Kritik des herrschenden Antirassismus* (2nd ed.,

pp. 140–160). Dietz Berlin.

Brockwell, A. J., Mochizuki, Y., & Sprague, T. (2022). Designing indicators and assessment tools for SDG Target 4.7: A critique of the current approach and a proposal for an

Bek, August; Brelage, Tristan; Pedersen, Casper Gjødvad; Roslund, Jon Ture

'Inside-Out' strategy. *Compare*. Scopus.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/03057925.2022.2129957>

Bukharin, N. (1925). *Historical Materialism* (E. Crawford, Trans.). Cosmonaut Classic.

Butcher, S. (2022). Urban equality and the SDGs: Three provocations for a relational agenda.

International Development Planning Review, 44(1), 13–32.

<https://doi.org/10.3828/idpr.2021.6>

Caria, S. (2022). Cooperation Regimes and Hegemonic Struggle: Opportunities and

Challenges for Developing Countries. *Politics and Governance*, 10(2), 71–81.

Political Science Database; ProQuest Central; Social Science Database.

<https://doi.org/10.17645/pag.v10i2.4919>

Chirot, D., & Hall, T. D. (2023). *World-System Theory*.

Choudhary, N. (2023). Critiquing the SDG Framework Through the Lens of Goal Two:

Empirical Reflections from Two Case Studies in India. *Forum for Development*

Studies, 50(2), 261–281. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08039410.2022.2099459>

Das, A., & Albinsson, P. A. (2023). Consumption Culture and Critical Sustainability

Discourses: Voices from the Global South. *Sustainability (Switzerland)*, 15(9).

Scopus. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su15097719>

de Castro, D., & Yu, Z. (2023). Unpacking the interplay of class, production, and sustainable

development in international environmental law through the lens of Evgeny

Pashukanis' commodity theory. *Cogent Social Sciences*, 9(1).

<https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2023.2238457>

Du Pisani, J. A. (2006). Sustainable development – historical roots of the concept.

Environmental Sciences, 3(2), 83–96. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15693430600688831>

Bek, August; Brelage, Tristan; Pedersen, Casper Gjødvad; Roslund, Jon Ture

Eger, C., Munar, A. M., & Hsu, C. (2022). Gender and tourism sustainability. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 30(7), 1459–1475.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/09669582.2021.1963975>

Egger, L. (2022). Die dunkle Seite der Hegemonie. In R. Bohnstingl, A. Kranebitter, L. L. Obermayr, & K. Reitterer (Eds.), *Jahrbuch für marxistische Gesellschaftskritik: Staatskritik, Marxistisches Denken* (pp. 39–55). Mandelbaum.

Fahed, Z., & Daou, A. M. (2021). Interreligious Dialogue as a Gateway to the Sustainable Development Goals: A Lebanese Case Study. *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, 56(1), 24–54. ProQuest Central; Research Library; Social Science Database.

<https://doi.org/10.1353/ecu.2021.0005>

Fonjong, L. N., & Gyapong, A. Y. (2021). Plantations, women, and food security in Africa: Interrogating the investment pathway towards zero hunger in Cameroon and Ghana. *World Development*, 138, 105293. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2020.105293>

Foster, J. B. (2023). Planned Degrowth: Ecosocialism and Sustainable Human Development. *Monthly Review: An Independent Socialist Magazine*, 75(3), 1–29.

https://doi.org/10.14452/MR-075-03-2023-07_1

Foster, J. B., & Holleman, H. (2014). The theory of unequal ecological exchange: A Marx-Odum dialectic. *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 41(2), 199–233.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/03066150.2014.889687>

Frank, A. A., & Mattioli, L. (2023). Implementation of Sustainable Development Goals at the Local-Neighbourhood Scale. *Journal of Urban and Regional Analysis*, 15(1), 125–148. <https://doi.org/10.37043/JURA.2023.15.1.6>

Freistein, K., & Mahler, B. (2016). The potential for tackling inequality in the Sustainable Development Goals. *Third World Quarterly*, 37(12), 2139–2155.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2016.1166945>

Bek, August; Brelage, Tristan; Pedersen, Casper Gjørdvad; Roslund, Jon Ture

- Fukuda-Parr, S. (2016). From the Millennium Development Goals to the Sustainable Development Goals: Shifts in purpose, concept, and politics of global goal setting for development. *Gender & Development*, 24(1), 43–52.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13552074.2016.1145895>
- Fukuda-Parr, S., & McNeill, D. (2019). Knowledge and Politics in Setting and Measuring the SDGs: Introduction to Special Issue. *Global Policy*, 10(S1), 5–15.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/1758-5899.12604>
- Gabor, D. (2021). The Wall Street Consensus. *Development and Change*, 52(3), 429–459.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/dech.12645>
- Galbiati, L. A., González, A. B. P., Santos, N. M. dos, Palmieri, R. H., & Rodrigues, E. R. (2022). Ruptures from the cattle policy: An analysis according to the Sustainable Development Goals. *Ambiente & Sociedade*, 25. <https://doi.org/10.1590/1809-4422asoc20220021L5OA>
- Glyptou, K. (2022). Operationalising Tourism Sustainability at the Destination Level: A Systems Thinking Approach Along the SDGs. *Tourism Planning & Development*, ahead-of-print(ahead-of-print), 1–27.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/21568316.2022.2069150>
- Gore, E., & LeBaron, G. (2019). Using social reproduction theory to understand unfree labour. *Capital & Class*, 43(4), 561–580. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0309816819880787>
- Griffiths, T. G. (2021). Education to transform the world: Limits and possibilities in and against the SDGs and ESD. *International Studies in Sociology of Education*, 30(1–2), 73–92. Scopus. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09620214.2020.1854829>
- Halliki, K., & Aigner, E. (2022). From “Decent work and economic growth” to “Sustainable work and economic degrowth”: A new framework for SDG 8. *Empirica*, 49(2), 281–311. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10663-021-09526-5>

Bek, August; Brelage, Tristan; Pedersen, Casper Gjørdvad; Roslund, Jon Ture

Haustein, J., & Tomalin, E. (2021). Religion, Populism, and the Politics of the Sustainable Development Goals. *Social Policy and Society*, 20(2), 296–309.

<https://doi.org/10.1017/S147474642000072X>

Hope, J. (2021). The anti-politics of sustainable development: Environmental critique from assemblage thinking in Bolivia. *Transactions - Institute of British Geographers* (1965), 46(1), 208–222. <https://doi.org/10.1111/tran.12409>

Hope, J. (2022). Globalising sustainable development: Decolonial disruptions and environmental justice in Bolivia. *Area*, 54(2), 176–184.

Ijjas, F. (2021). Sustainability and the real value of care in times of a global pandemic: SDG5 and Covid-19. *Discover Sustainability*, 2(1). Scopus. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s43621-021-00054-7>

Immler, N. L., & Sackers, H. (2022). The UN-Sustainable Development Goals going local: Learning from localising human rights. *The International Journal of Human Rights*, 26(2), 262–284. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13642987.2021.1913411>

IOM. (n.d.). *COP27: Addressing Human Mobility Driven by Climate Change*. International Organization for Migration. Retrieved December 18, 2023, from <https://www.iom.int/cop27-addressing-human-mobility-driven-climate-change>

Kapto, S. (2019). Layers of Politics and Power Struggles in the SDG Indicators Process. *Global Policy*, 10(S1), 134–136. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1758-5899.12630>

Kemper, A. (2021). Klassismus—Eine Intervention. *Widerspruch*, 77, 165–173.

Koenig-Archibugi, M. (2019). Global governance. In J. Michie (Ed.), *The handbook of globalisation* (3rd ed., pp. 334–343). Edward Elgar Publishing.

Konicz, T. (2020). *Klimakiller Kapital: Wie ein Wirtschaftssystem unsere Lebensgrundlagen zerstört*. Mandelbaum.

Bek, August; Brelage, Tristan; Pedersen, Casper Gjørdvad; Roslund, Jon Ture

Krause, T., & Tilker, A. (2022). How the loss of forest fauna undermines the achievement of the SDGs. *Ambio*, 51(1), 103–113. ABI/INFORM Collection; Biological Science Database; Criminal Justice Database; Engineering Database; Environmental Science Database; ProQuest Central; Research Library; Science Database; Social Science Database; Sociology Database. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13280-021-01547-5>

Krauss, J. E. (2022). Unpacking SDG 15, its targets and indicators: Tracing ideas of conservation. *Globalizations*, 19(8), 1179–1194. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14747731.2022.2035480>

Larsen, P. B., Haller, T., & Kothari, A. (2022). Sanctioning Disciplined Grabs (SDGs): From SDGs as Green Anti-Politics Machine to Radical Alternatives? *Geoforum*, 131, 20–26. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2022.02.007>

Latour, B., & Schultz, N. (2022). *On the emergence of an ecological class - a memo: Subject: how to promote the emergence of an ecological class that's self-aware and proud* (J. Rose, Trans.). Polity Press.

Mariano, S., & Molari, B. (2022). Gender equality from the MDGs to the SDGs: A feminist analysis. *Revista de Administração Pública (Rio de Janeiro)*, 56(6), 823–842. <https://doi.org/10.1590/0034-761220220124x>

Marx, K. (1977). *Marx-Engels-Werke: Band 4* (8th ed.). Dietz Berlin.

Marx, K. (1978). *Marx-Engels-Werke: Band 3* (5th ed.). Dietz Berlin.

Marx, K. (1990). *Capital: A critique of political economy* (B. Fowkes, Trans.). Penguin Books in association with New Left Review.

Marx, K., & Engels, F. (1967). *Marx-Engels-Werke: Band 37* (1st ed.). Dietz Berlin.

McIlwaine, C., Ansari, M. R., Leal, J. G., Vieira, F., & dos Santos, J. S. (2023).

Countermapping SDG 5 to address violence against women and girls in the favelas of

Bek, August; Brelage, Tristan; Pedersen, Casper Gjødvad; Roslund, Jon Ture

Maré, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. *Journal of Maps*, 1–11.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/17445647.2023.2178343>

Meißner, H. (2020). Work-Life-Antinomie: Der Produktionsprozess des Kapitals als systemische Produktionskrise. In I. Stütze (Ed.), *Work-Work-Balance: Marx, die Poren des Arbeitstags und neue Offensiven des Kapitals* (1st ed., pp. 35–54). Dietz Berlin.

Mendívil, E. R. (2022). Klasse und Rassismus. In E. R. Mendívil & B. Sarbo (Eds.), *Die Diversität der Ausbeutung: Zur Kritik des herrschenden Antirassismus* (2. Auflage). Dietz Berlin.

Mendívil, E. R., & Sarbo, B. (2022). Intersektionalität, Identität und Marxismus. In E. R. Mendívil & B. Sarbo (Eds.), *Die Diversität der Ausbeutung: Zur Kritik des herrschenden Antirassismus* (2nd ed., pp. 102–120). Dietz Berlin.

Mendívil, E. R., & Vögele, H. (2022). Soziale Reproduktion, Geschlecht und Rassismus. In E. R. Mendívil & B. Sarbo (Eds.), *Die Diversität der Ausbeutung: Zur Kritik des herrschenden Antirassismus* (2nd ed., pp. 64–82). Dietz Berlin.

Merry, S. E. (2019). The Sustainable Development Goals Confront the Infrastructure of Measurement. *Global Policy*, 10(S1), 146–148. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1758-5899.12606>

Moore, J. W. (2015). *Capitalism in the Web of Life: Ecology and the Accumulation of Capital* (1st Edition.). Verso.

Moreno, J., Van de Ven, D.-J., Sampedro, J., Gambhir, A., Woods, J., & Gonzalez-Eguino, M. (2023). Assessing synergies and trade-offs of diverging Paris-compliant mitigation strategies with long-term SDG objectives. *Global Environmental Change Part A: Human & Policy Dimensions*, 78, 102624.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gloenvcha.2022.102624>

Bek, August; Brelage, Tristan; Pedersen, Casper Gjødvad; Roslund, Jon Ture

Moyo, S., Yeros, P., & Jha, P. (2012). Imperialism and Primitive Accumulation: Notes on the

New Scramble for Africa. *Agrarian South: Journal of Political Economy: A*

Triannual Journal of Agrarian South Network and CARES, 1(2), 181–203.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/227797601200100203>

Mutung'u, G. (2022). The United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human

Rights, Women and Digital ID in Kenya: A Decolonial Perspective. *Business and*

Human Rights Journal, 7(1), 117–133. ABI/INFORM Collection; Political Science

Database; ProQuest Central; Social Science Database.

<https://doi.org/10.1017/bhj.2021.60>

Nagati, O., Gad, H., El-Didi, A., Kihila, J. M., Mbuya, E., & Njavike, E. (2023). Towards a

Bottom-up Approach for Localising SDGs in African Cities: Findings from Cairo and

Dar es Salaam. *Africa Development*, 48(1), 79–111. Scopus.

<https://doi.org/10.57054/ad.v48i1.3033>

Nehring, F. (2021). Klassismus: Ideologiekritik als Ideologie. *Widerspruch*, 77, 175–182.

Ness, I. (2023). *Migration as economic imperialism how international labour mobility*

undermines economic development in poor countries. Polity Press.

Notz, G. (2020). Streit um Arbeits- und Lebenszeit. In I. Stütze (Ed.), *Work-Work-Balance:*

Marx, die Poren des Arbeitstags und neue Offensiven des Kapitals (1st ed., pp. 74–

95). Dietz Berlin.

Novovic, G. (2023). Gender mainstreaming 2.0: Emergent gender equality agendas under

Sustainable Development Goals. *Third World Quarterly*, 44(5), 1058–1076.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2023.2174848>

Okeke, D. C. (2021). Prospects for sustainable urban development in Africa—(Re)viewed

from a planning perspective. *International Planning Studies*, 26(2), 198–217.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/13563475.2020.1785278>

Bek, August; Brelage, Tristan; Pedersen, Casper Gjødvad; Roslund, Jon Ture

Olwig, M. F. (2021a). Introduction: Commodifying humanitarian sentiments? The black box of the for-profit and non-profit partnership. *World Development*, *145*, 105536.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2021.105536>

Olwig, M. F. (2021b). Sustainability superheroes? For-profit narratives of “doing good” in the era of the SDGs. *World Development*, *142*, 105427.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2021.105427>

Page, M. J., McKenzie, J. E., Bossuyt, P. M., Boutron, I., Hoffmann, T. C., Mulrow, C. D., Shamseer, L., Tetzlaff, J. M., Akl, E. A., Brennan, S. E., Chou, R., Glanville, J., Grimshaw, J. M., Hróbjartsson, A., Lalu, M. M., Li, T., Loder, E. W., Mayo-Wilson, E., McDonald, S., ... Moher, D. (2021). The PRISMA 2020 statement: An updated guideline for reporting systematic reviews. *BMJ*, *n71*. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.n71>

Perry, K. K. (2021). The new ‘bond-age’, climate crisis and the case for climate reparations:

Unpicking old/new colonialities of finance for development within the SDGs.

Geoforum, *126*, 361–371. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2021.09.003>

Rai, S. M., Brown, B. D., & Ruwanpura, K. N. (2019). SDG 8: Decent work and economic growth – A gendered analysis. *World Development*, *113*, 368–380.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2018.09.006>

Rajani, F., & Boluk, K. A. (2022). A Critical Commentary on the SDGs and the Role of Tourism. *Tourism and Hospitality (Basel)*, *3*(4), 855–860.

<https://doi.org/10.3390/tourhosp3040053>

Rocha de Siqueira, I., & Ramalho, L. (2022). Participatory methodologies and caring about numbers in the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals Agenda. *Policy & Society*,

41(4), 486–497. <https://doi.org/10.1093/polsoc/puac016>

Roy, J. R., Prakash, A., Some, S., Singh, C., Bezner Kerr, R., Caretta, M. A., Conde, C.,

Ferre, M. R., Schuster-Wallace, C., Tirado-von der Pahlen, M. C., Totin, E., Vij, S.,

Bek, August; Brelage, Tristan; Pedersen, Casper Gjødvad; Roslund, Jon Ture

- Baker, E., Dean, G., Hillenbrand, E., Irvine, A., Islam, F., McGlade, K., Nyantakyi-Frimpong, H., ... Tandon, I. (2022). Synergies and trade-offs between climate change adaptation options and gender equality: A review of the global literature. *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, 9(1). Scopus. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-022-01266-6>
- Santos, C., & Mourato, J. M. (2022). Voices of contention: The value of development narratives in the age of climate (change) migration misconceptions. *Climate & Development*, 14(1), 13–24. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17565529.2021.1877103>
- Sarbo, B. (2022). Rassismus und gesellschaftliche Produktionsverhältnisse. In E. R. Mendivil & B. Sarbo (Eds.), *Die Diversität der Ausbeutung: Zur Kritik des herrschenden Antirassismus* (2nd ed., pp. 37–63). Dietz Berlin.
- Scheyvens, R., Banks, G., & Hughes, E. (2016). The Private Sector and the SDGs: The Need to Move Beyond ‘Business as Usual.’ *Sustainable Development*, 24(6), 371–382. <https://doi.org/10.1002/sd.1623>
- Slater, L. (2019). Good White People: Settler Colonial Anxiety and the Endurance of Racism. *Emotions (Perth, W.A.)*, 2019, 3(2), 266–281. <https://doi.org/10.1163/2208522X-02010060>
- Sorger, C. (2020). Was heißt denn hier normal? In I. Stützle (Ed.), *Work-Work-Balance: Marx, die Poren des Arbeitstags und neue Offensiven des Kapitals* (1st ed., pp. 176–193). Dietz Berlin.
- Sultana, F. (2022). The unbearable heaviness of climate coloniality. *Political Geography*, 99, 102638. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2022.102638>
- Taggart, J. (2022). A Decade Since Busan: Towards Legitimacy or a “New Tyranny” of Global Development Partnership? *The Journal of Development Studies*, 58(8), 1459–1477. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220388.2022.2032672>

Bek, August; Brelage, Tristan; Pedersen, Casper Gjødvad; Roslund, Jon Ture

Telleria, J., & Garcia-Arias, J. (2022a). The fantasmatic narrative of ‘sustainable development’. A political analysis of the 2030 Global Development Agenda. *Environment and Planning C: Politics and Space*, 40(1), 241–259. <https://doi.org/10.1177/23996544211018214>

Telleria, J., & Garcia-Arias, J. (2022b). The fantasmatic narrative of ‘sustainable development’. A political analysis of the 2030 Global Development Agenda. *Environment and Planning C: Politics and Space*, 40(1), 241–259. <https://doi.org/10.1177/23996544211018214>

Tichenor, M., Merry, S. E., Grek, S., & Bandola-Gill, J. (2022). Global public policy in a quantified world: Sustainable Development Goals as epistemic infrastructures. *Policy & Society*, 41(4), 431–444. <https://doi.org/10.1093/polsoc/puac015>

United Nations. (n.d.). *SDG Indicator 10.7.2 on Migration Policies / Population Division*. Retrieved December 18, 2023, from <https://www.un.org/development/desa/pd/data/sdg-indicator-1072-migration-policies>

Vaitsman, J., Duarte, N. S., Lobato, L. V., & Paes-Sousa, R. (2023). Traditional practices and sustainable development: Local indicators of sustainability among caiçaras and quilombolas in Bocaina. *Ambiente & Sociedade*, 26. <https://doi.org/10.1590/1809-4422asoc20210169r1vu2023L1OA>

Vandemoortele, J. (2018). From simple-minded MDGs to muddle-headed SDGs. *Development Studies Research*, 5(1), 83–89. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21665095.2018.1479647>

Vijayarasa, R., & Liu, M. (2022). Fast Fashion for 2030: Using the Pattern of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to Cut a More Gender-Just Fashion Sector. *Business and Human Rights Journal*, 7(1), 45–66. ABI/INFORM Collection; Political Science

Bek, August; Brelage, Tristan; Pedersen, Casper Gjørdvad; Roslund, Jon Ture

Database; ProQuest Central; Social Science Database.

<https://doi.org/10.1017/bhj.2021.29>

Vogt, M. (2022). Development postcolonial: A critical approach to understanding SDGs in the perspective of Christian social ethics. *Global Sustainability*, 5. ABI/INFORM Collection; Environmental Science Database; ProQuest Central; Research Library; Social Science Database. <https://doi.org/10.1017/sus.2021.31>

Voulvoulis, N., Giakoumis, T., Hunt, C., Kioupi, V., Petrou, K. N., Souliotis, I., Vaghela, C., & binti Wan Rosely, Wih. (2022). Systems thinking as a paradigm shift for sustainability transformation. *Global Environmental Change Part A: Human & Policy Dimensions*, 75, 102544. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gloenvcha.2022.102544>

Vu, A. N., & Long, G. (2023). Universalism and national ownership in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): Perspectives from Vietnam. *International Development Planning Review*, 45(1), 41–66. <https://doi.org/10.3828/idpr.2022.9>

Wallerstein, I. (2004). 2. The Modern World-System as a Capitalist World-Economy: Production, Surplus-Value, and Polarization. In *World-Systems Analysis* (pp. 23–41). Duke University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9780822399018-004>

Ward, D., Melbourne-Thomas, J., Pecl, G. T., Evans, K., Green, M., McCormack, P. C., Novaglio, C., Trebilco, R., Bax, N., Brasier, M. J., Cavan, E. L., Edgar, G., Hunt, H. L., Jansen, J., Jones, R., Lea, M.-A., Makomere, R., Mull, C., Semmens, J. M., & Shaw, J. (2022). Safeguarding marine life: Conservation of biodiversity and ecosystems. *Reviews in Fish Biology & Fisheries*, 32(1), 65–100. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11160-022-09700-3>

Wecker, R. (2020). Die »Mauerbrecher«. In I. Stütze (Ed.), *Work-Work-Balance: Marx, die Poren des Arbeitstags und neue Offensiven des Kapitals* (1st ed., pp. 96–117). Dietz Berlin.

Bek, August; Brelage, Tristan; Pedersen, Casper Gjødvad; Roslund, Jon Ture

Weiss, H. (2021). Social Reproduction. *Cambridge Encyclopedia of Anthropology*.

<https://doi.org/10.29164/21socialrepro>

Williams, E. (2014). *Capitalism and Slavery*. UNC Press Books.

Wright, E. O. (2009). *Approaches to Class Analysis* (1st ed.). Cambridge University Press.

Appendix

Appendix 1: Search queries and results

Appendix 2: Excluded studies grouped into their respective exclusion criteria

Appendix 3: Thematic groups (table 2) and approach groups (table 3) of included studies

Appendix 1

Overview of search queries and respective numerical search results.

	Results 1 Search 1	Results 2 Search 2	Results 3 Search 3	Results 4 Search 4	Results 5 Search 5	Results 6 Search 6	Results 7 Search 7	Results 8 Search 8	Results 9 Search 9	Results 10 Search 10	Results 11 Search 11	Results 12 Search 12	SUM
Database	SDG* AND imperial* NOT Education NOT Health 0	SDG* AND imperial* 0	SDG* AND critique* AND class NOT school 0	SDG* AND critique* school* 50	SDG* AND intersection a)* NOT school* 7	SDG* AND ("social reproduction") 4	SDG* AND "unequal exchange" 0	SDG* AND "world system*" 2	SDG* AND "primitive accumulation" 0	SDG* AND Marx* NOT school 2	SDG* AND capitalism AND reproduction NOT school 0	SDG* AND capitalism AND reproduction AND crit* 9	78
ProQuest Social Science	SDG* AND imperial* NOT Education NOT Health 99	SDG* AND critique* AND class NOT school 4	SDG* AND crit* AND intersection a)* NOT school 33	SDG* AND ("social reproduction") 30	SDG* AND "unequal exchange" 16	SDG* AND "social reproduction" 22	SDG* AND "primitive accumulation" 5	SDG* AND Marx* NOT school 33	SDG* AND capitalism AND reproduction NOT school 33	SDG* AND Marx* NOT school 9	SDG* AND capitalism AND reproduction NOT school 0	SDG* AND capitalism AND crit* 4	323
EBSCOhost	SDG* AND imperial* NOT Education NOT Health 18	SDG* AND critique* AND class NOT school 0	SDG* AND critique* NOT school 20	SDG* AND intersection a)* NOT SCHOOL 1	SDG* AND intersection a)* 4	SDG* AND "social reproduction" 2	SDG* AND "unequal exchange" 0	SDG* AND "world system*" 1	SDG* AND "primitive accumulation" 0	SDG* AND Marx* NOT school 9	SDG* AND capitalism AND reproduction NOT school 0	SDG* AND capitalism AND crit* 4	59
Register	SDG* AND imperial* NOT Education NOT Health 41	Sustainable Development Goal* AND Critique* AND Capital* 15	Sustainable Development Goal* AND "Unequal exchange" AND Imperialis* 7	Sustainable Development Goal* AND "Unequal exchange" AND Imperialis* 20	SDG* AND intersection a)* AND Imperialis* 13	SDG* AND "social reproduction" AND Imperialis* 23	SDG* AND "unequal exchange" 0	SDG* AND "world system*" 1	SDG* AND "primitive accumulation" 0	SDG* AND Marx* NOT school 9	SDG* AND capitalism AND reproduction NOT school 0	SDG* AND capitalism AND crit* 4	119

Appendix 2

The following list is the exclusion of the studies identified through databases and registers. Studies are included if they are critically examining the SDGs (in sum or individual ones). Articles which passed the previous screening steps but failed in this step were not included in the study because of the following reasons:

1. SDGs as a wider framework of analysis and not main part. This includes a wide range of minor inclusion of the SDGs. Some of the articles use the SDGs as a wider framework to point to related or deeper issues, others use the SDGs to point out the research problem's relevancy, while others emphasize the fulfillment of the SDGs in the analysis outcomes and place the results of their own research in the context of the necessary fulfilment of the SDGs.
2. SDGs function as an example. This grouping includes both short examples to support arguments and articles that present methods (etc.) and establish their functionality based on the SDGs and other frameworks.
3. Policy Analysis and their compatibility with SDGs and SDG implementation. In this grouping all articles are summed up that only analyze specific policies and how compatible they are with the SDGs (and thus do not question the SDGs or engage with them critically in general) as well as analyses of policies and practices to implement the SDGs.
4. Methodological suggestions. This group includes those studies that propose new or improved ways of measuring the SDGs – academically as well as in the field.
5. SDGs in educational context. This grouping includes all articles that have used the SDGs as a vehicle for achieving other non-SDG goals in the education context. Despite earlier steps in the identification process of this systemic review that explicitly excluded studies focused on education as the main framework, the two excluded studies eluded those filters earlier on.

Exclusion of records identified through databases:

Exclusion reason	Records identified through databases and registers	Records identified via other methods
1	Abidin & Prasetyani, 2021; Aboagye et al., 2022; Abramovich & Vasiliu, 2023; Bozeman III et al., 2022; Budzi, 2023; Carolina & Paura, 2022; Cole, 2022; Cooke & Wood, 2023; Davidson, 2021; Ditta-Apichai et al., 2022; Dutta et al., 2023; Ezeoha et al., 2022; Ferreira et al., 2023; Gambetta et al., 2021; Giang & Caldicott, 2022; Gupta et al., 2022; Gutberlet, 2021; Hernández-Pajares, 2023; Hickel & Sullivan, 2023; Higgins-Desbiolles, Blanchard, et al., 2022; Higgins-Desbiolles, Scheyvens, et al., 2022; Hirth et al., 2022; Krüger et al., 2022; Lugo-Morin, 2021; Morea, 2021; Parashar	Mezzadri, 2022; n = 1

	& Schulz, 2021; Patterson, 2022; Pitt & Tzanou, 2022; Pless et al., 2022; Porumbescu & Pogan, 2021; Qin et al., 2022; Schlosser et al., 2023; Sen et al., 2022; Shevchenko et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2023; Yeboah et al., 2022; n = 36	
2	Fache et al., 2021; Malay, 2021; Njoh, 2022; n = 3	n = 0
3	Akbas et al., 2022; Bakibinga-Gaswaga, 2021; Buhalis et al., 2023; Copeland, 2021; Devlin et al., 2023; Diaz-Vega et al., 2023; Huan et al., 2022; Lopes dos Santos & Jacobi, 2022; Mhlanga & Ndhlovu, 2023; Montesano et al., 2023; Novovic, 2022; Olusanmi et al., 2021; Rowe & Schuster-Wallace, 2023; Sadeek et al., 2023; Savelyeva & Park, 2022; Schlör & Schubert, 2022; Stevenson et al., 2021; Šuligoj & Kennell, 2022; Tweneboah-Koduah et al., 2023; Viana et al., 2023; Vera et al., 2022; Wynn & Jones, 2022; Zhu et al., 2022; n = 23	Barbier & Burgess, 2021; Barbier & Burgess, 2023; Beck & Ferasso, 2023; Linnerud et al., 2021; Sompolska-Rzechuła & Kurdyś-Kujawska, 2021; n = 5
4	Maher et al., 2022 ² ; Deveci et al., 2022; Khalikova et al., 2021; Konold & Schwietring, 2021; Rweyendela, 2022; Shanthosh Janani et al., 2022; Singh & Jayaram, 2022; Stepanek Lockhart, 2022; n = 8	n = 0
5	Mambu, 2023; Chapman & O’Gorman, 2022; n = 2	n = 1

Appendix 2 Bibliography:

- Abidin, A. Z., & Prasetyani, D. (2021). Socio-economic study on empowering women farmers to support the SDGs. *IOP Conference Series: Earth and Environmental Science*, 905(1), 12135. <https://doi.org/10.1088/1755-1315/905/1/012135>
- Aboagye, E. M., Mensah, F., Owusu, N. O., Effah, K. O., & Erzuah, M. (2022). Disability inclusiveness in Covid-19 pandemic policies in West Africa: “Are we left behind?” *Cogent Social Sciences*, 8(1). ProQuest Central; Social Science Database. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2022.2079803>
- Abramovich, N., & Vasiliu, A. (2023). Sustainability as fairness: A Rawlsian framework linking intergenerational equity and the sustainable development goals (SDGs) with business practices. *Sustainable Development (Bradford, West Yorkshire, England)*, 31(3), 1328–1342. <https://doi.org/10.1002/sd.2451>
- Akbas, B., Kocaman, A. S., Nock, D., & Trotter, P. A. (2022). Rural electrification: An overview of optimization methods. *Renewable & Sustainable Energy Reviews*, 156, 111935. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.rser.2021.111935>
- Bakibinga-Gaswaga, E. (2021). African Traditional Religion and Law-Intersections between the Islamic and non-Islamic Worlds and the Impact on Development in the 2030 Agenda era. *Law and Development Review*, 14(1), 1–31. ABI/INFORM Collection; Environmental Science Database; Political Science Database; ProQuest Central; Research Library; Social Science Database. <https://doi.org/10.1515/ldr-2020-0011>
- Barbier, E. B., & Burgess, J. C. (2021). Institutional Quality, Governance and Progress towards the SDGs. *Sustainability*, 13(21), 11798. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su132111798>
- Barbier, E. B., & Burgess, J. C. (2023). Natural Capital, Institutional Quality and SDG Progress in Emerging Market and Developing Economies. *Sustainability*, 15(4), 3055. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su15043055>

² This study is rather unique: It proposes a methodological tool to engage with research regarding the SDGs, but is itself not a critical analysis of the SDGs themselves and thus excluded from this research.

- Beck, D., & Ferasso, M. (2023). How can Stakeholder Capitalism contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals? A Cross-network Literature Analysis. *Ecological Economics*, 204, 107673. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecolecon.2022.107673>
- Bozeman III, J. F., Nobler, E., & Nock, D. (2022). A Path Toward Systemic Equity in Life Cycle Assessment and Decision-Making: Standardizing Sociodemographic Data Practices. *Environmental Engineering Science*, 39(9), 759–769. <https://doi.org/10.1089/ees.2021.0375>
- Budzi, J. (2023). Reimagining the Developmental State in Africa through the East Asian Mirror. *African Journal of Development Studies*, 2023(si1), 69–91. <https://doi.org/10.31920/2634-3649/2023/sin1a4>
- Buhalis, D., Leung, X. Y., Fan, D., Darcy, S., Chen, G., Xu, F., Wei-Han Tan, G., Nunkoo, R., & Farmaki, A. (2023). Editorial: Tourism 2030 and the contribution to the sustainable development goals: The tourism review viewpoint. *Tourism Review (Association Internationale d'experts Scientifiques Du Tourisme)*, 78(2), 293–313. <https://doi.org/10.1108/TR-04-2023-620>
- Carolina, F., & Paura, R. (2022). Re-discovering Aurelio Peccei's contribution to Futures Studies. *European Journal of Futures Research*, 10(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40309-022-00193-8>
- Chapman, S. N., & O'Gorman, L. (2022). Transforming Learning Environments in Early Childhood Contexts Through the Arts: Responding to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. *International Journal of Early Childhood*, 54(1), 33–50. Scopus. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13158-022-00320-3>
- Cole, D. R. (2022). Caught between the air and earth: A schizoanalytic critique of the role of the education in the development of a new airport. *Educational Philosophy & Theory*, 54(4), 422–433. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131857.2020.1864322>
- Cooke, F. L., & Wood, G. (2023). Closer, stronger, and brighter: Bringing ib and ihm together through the lens of sustainable development goals. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2023.2252316>
- Copeland, K. (2021). Reimagining innovation for “social” entrepreneurship: Nonhuman spaces for the SDGs. *Journal of the International Council for Small Business (Print)*, 2(2), 134–146. <https://doi.org/10.1080/26437015.2021.1882917>
- Davidson, L. (2021). DfID's Last Stand: A Belated but Welcome Theory of Change on Mental Health and Development. *Journal of Humanitarian Affairs*, 3(1), 40–45. <https://doi.org/10.7227/JHA.057>
- Deveci, M., Brito-Parada, P. R., Pamucar, D., & Varouchakis, E. A. (2022). Rough sets based Ordinal Priority Approach to evaluate sustainable development goals (SDGs) for sustainable mining. *Resources Policy*, 79, 103049. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.resourpol.2022.103049>
- Devlin, J., Hopeward, K., Hopeward, J., & Saint, C. (2023). Leading the Circular Future: South Australia's Potential Influence on Circular Economy Development in Asia-Pacific Region. *Sustainability (Switzerland)*, 15(18). Scopus. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su151813756>
- Diaz-Vega, M., Moreno-Rodriguez, R., López-Díaz, J. M., & López-Bastías, J. L. (2023). Keys to Build an Inclusive University System: The Case of Spanish Public Universities. *Social Sciences*, 12(1), 11. <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci12010011>
- Ditta-Apichai, M., Sroyetch, S., & Caldicott, R. W. (2022). A critique of community-based tourism development: The comparative case of betong and Pho Tak Districts, Thailand. *Community Development*. Scopus. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15575330.2022.2144921>

- Dutta, D., Prasad, C. S., & Chakraborty, A. (2023). Thinking beyond Ecology: Can Reskilling Youth Lead to Sustainable Transitions in Agri-Food Systems? *Social Sciences*, 12(9), 478. ProQuest Central; Social Science Database. <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci12090478>
- Ezeoha, A., Akinyoade, A., Amobi, I., Ekumankama, O., Kamau, P., Kazimierczuk, A., Mukoko, C., Okoye, I., & Uche, C. (2022). Multinationals, Capital Export, and the Inclusive Development Debate in Developing Countries: The Nigerian Insight. *The European Journal of Development Research*, 34(5), 2224–2250. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41287-021-00500-2>
- Fache, E., Le Meur, P.-Y., & Rodary, E. (2021). The New Scramble for the Pacific: A Frontier Approach. *Pacific Affairs*, 94(1), 57–75. <https://doi.org/10.5509/202194157>
- Ferreira, M. L., Dalmas, F. B., Santanna, M., Rodrigues, E. A., & Sodré, M. G. (2023). Sustainable development in São Paulo's Green Belt Biosphere Reserve: Between the void of municipal environmental policies and the ecosystem management of the territory. *Revista de Gestão Ambiental e Sustentabilidade*, 12(1), 1–37. <https://doi.org/10.5585/2023.22940>
- Gambetta, N., Fronti, I. G., Geldres-Weiss, V. V., Gómez-Villegas, M., & Jaramillo, M. J. (2021). The Potential Of Listed Companies To Finance The Sustainable Development Goals. *Journal of Legal, Ethical and Regulatory Issues*, 24(1), 1–11.
- Giang, T. H. T., & Caldicott, R. W. (2022). Developing resilience for small island tourism planning: A qualitative design infusing the sustainability trilogy with three streams of resilience thinking. *Journal of Marine and Island Cultures*, 11(1), 128–157. Scopus. <https://doi.org/10.21463/jmic.2022.11.1.10>
- Gupta, H., Nishi, M., & Gasparatos, A. (2022). Community-based responses for tackling environmental and socio-economic change and impacts in mountain social–ecological systems. *Ambio*, 51(5), 1123–1142. ABI/INFORM Collection; Biological Science Database; Criminal Justice Database; Engineering Database; Environmental Science Database; ProQuest Central; Research Library; Science Database; Social Science Database; Sociology Database. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13280-021-01651-6>
- Gutberlet, J. (2021). Grassroots waste picker organizations addressing the UN sustainable development goals. *World Development*, 138, 105195-. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2020.105195>
- Hernández-Pajares, J. (2023). Exploring the research on sustainability reporting: A comprehensive bibliometric and literature review in the Latin American context. *Revista de Gestão Ambiental e Sustentabilidade*, 12(1), 1–44. Environmental Science Database; ProQuest Central; Social Science Database. <https://doi.org/10.5585/2023.22801>
- Hickel, J., & Sullivan, D. (2023). Capitalism, Global Poverty, and the Case for Democratic Socialism. *Monthly Review (New York. 1949)*, 75(3), 99–113. https://doi.org/10.14452/MR-075-03-2023-07_7
- Higgins-Desbiolles, F., Blanchard, L.-A., & Urbain, Y. (2022). Peace through tourism: Critical reflections on the intersections between peace, justice, sustainable development and tourism. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 30(2–3), 335–351. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09669582.2021.1952420>
- Higgins-Desbiolles, F., Scheyvens, R. A., & Bhatia, B. (2022). Decolonising tourism and development: From orphanage tourism to community empowerment in Cambodia. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, ahead-of-print(ahead-of-print), 1–21. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09669582.2022.2039678>
- Hirth, S., Bürstmayr, T., & Strüver, A. (2022). Discourses of sustainability and imperial modes of food provision: Agri-food-businesses and consumers in Germany.

- Agriculture and Human Values, 39(2), 573–588. ABI/INFORM Collection; Agriculture Science Database; Arts & Humanities Database; Engineering Database; Environmental Science Database; ProQuest Central; Research Library; Social Science Database; Sociology Database. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10460-021-10269-z>
- Huan, Y., Wang, L., Burgman, M., Li, H., Yu, Y., Zhang, J., & Liang, T. (2022). A multi-perspective composite assessment framework for prioritizing targets of sustainable development goals. *Sustainable Development*, 30(5), 833–847. <https://doi.org/10.1002/sd.2283>
- Khalikova, V. R., Jin, M., & Chopra, S. S. (2021). Gender in sustainability research: Inclusion, intersectionality, and patterns of knowledge production. *Journal of Industrial Ecology*, 25(4), 900–912. Scopus. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jiec.13095>
- Konold, D., & Schwietring, T. (2021). The Great Discrepancy: Political Action, Sustainable Development and Ecological Communication. *Politics and Governance*, 9(1), 131–140. <https://doi.org/10.17645/pag.v9i1.3631>
- Krüger, C., Dantas, M. K., Paschoalotto, M. A. C., Batalhão, A. C. da S., Passador, C. S., & Ferreira Caldana, A. C. (2022). The Interconnections between Environment and Health in Cross-border Regions: Contributions to Public Policies. *Ambiente & Sociedade*, 25. <https://doi.org/10.1590/1809-4422asoc20200164r1vu2022L4OA>
- Linnerud, K., Holden, E., & Simonsen, M. (2021). Closing the sustainable development gap: A global study of goal interactions. *Sustainable Development*, 29(4), 738–753. <https://doi.org/10.1002/sd.2171>
- Lopes dos Santos, K., & Jacobi, P. R. (2022). Alignments between e-waste legislation and the Sustainable Development Goals: The United Kingdom, Brazil, and Ghana case studies. *Geo: Geography and Environment*, 9(1). Scopus. <https://doi.org/10.1002/geo.2.104>
- Lugo-Morin, D. R. (2021). Global Future: Low-Carbon Economy or High-Carbon Economy? *World*, 2(2), 175. <https://doi.org/10.3390/world2020012>
- Maher, R., Mann, S., & McAlpine, C. A. (2022). MetaMAP: a graphical tool for designing initiatives to support multiple sustainability goals. *Sustainability Science*, 17(4), 1511–1536. Scopus. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11625-022-01157-4>
- Malay, O. E. (2021). How to Articulate Beyond GDP and Businesses' Social and Environmental Indicators? *Social Indicators Research*, 155(1), 1–25. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-020-02583-6>
- Mambu, J. E. (2023). Embedding Sustainable Development Goals into critical English language teaching and learning. *Critical Inquiry in Language Studies*, 20(1), 46–76. Scopus. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15427587.2022.2099863>
- Mezzadri, A. (2022). The Social Reproduction of Pandemic Surplus Populations and Global Development Narratives on Inequality and Informal Labour. *Development and Change*, 53(6), 1230–1253. <https://doi.org/10.1111/dech.12736>
- Mhlanga, D., & Ndhlovu, E. (2023). The Implications of the Russia–Ukraine War on Sustainable Development Goals in Africa. *Fudan Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences*, 16(4), 435–454. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40647-023-00383-z>
- Montesano, F. S., Biermann, F., Kalfagianni, A., & Vijge, M. J. (2023). Greening labour? The role of the SDGs in fostering sustainability integration within trade unions. *Globalizations*, ahead-of-print(ahead-of-print), 1–21. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14747731.2023.2234174>
- Morea, J. P. (2021). Post COVID-19 Pandemic Scenarios in an Unequal World Challenges for Sustainable Development in Latin America. *World*, 2(1), 1. <https://doi.org/10.3390/world2010001>

- Njoh, A. J. (2022). Fairness, Equity, and Justice Implications of French-Influenced Environmental Policy in Africa. *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, 81(5), 927–955. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ajes.12484>
- Novovic, G. (2022). Can Agenda 2030 bring about “localization”? Policy limitations of Agenda 2030 in the broader global governance system. *Development Policy Review*, 40(4), 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.1111/dpr.12587>
- Olusanmi, O. A., Emeni, F. K., Uwuigbe, U., & Oyedayo, O. S. (2021). A bibliometric study on water management accounting research from 2000 to 2018 in Scopus database. *Cogent Social Sciences*, 7(1), 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2021.1886645>
- Parashar, S., & Schulz, M. (2021). Colonial legacies, postcolonial “selfhood” and the (un)doing of Africa. *Third World Quarterly*, 42(5), 867–881. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2021.1903313>
- Patterson, C. (2022). Context Matters: Science, Policy and the Lingering Effects of Colonialism. *AQ: Australian Quarterly*, 93(2), 31–40,42. Political Science Database; ProQuest Central; Social Science Database.
- Pitt, J., & Tzanou, M. (2022). Special Issue Introduction: Against Modern Indentured Servitude (“I’m Spartacus”). *IEEE Technology & Society Magazine*, 41(2), 20–23. <https://doi.org/10.1109/MTS.2022.3172670>
- Pless, N. M., Sengupta, A., Wheeler, M. A., & Maak, T. (2022). Responsible Leadership and the Reflective CEO: Resolving Stakeholder Conflict by Imagining What Could be done. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 180(1), 313–337. ABI/INFORM Collection; Arts & Humanities Database; Political Science Database; ProQuest Central; Research Library; Social Science Database. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-021-04865-6>
- Porumbescu, A., & Pogan, L. D. (2021). Gender equality in the European Union. From strategic engagement to achievements. *Revista de Stiinte Politice*, 72, 68–79.
- Qin, X., Wu, H., & Li, R. (2022). Digital finance and household carbon emissions in China. *China Economic Review* (1043951X), 76, 101872. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chieco.2022.101872>
- Rowe, A. M., & Schuster-Wallace, C. (2023). Implementing EDI across a large formal research network: Contributing to equitable and sustainable water solutions for a changing climate. *Geoforum*, 147. Scopus. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2023.103881>
- Rweyendela, A. G. (2022). Getting closer to SDG12: Incorporating industrial ecology principles into project EIA. *Journal of Environmental Planning and Management*, 65(6), 953–974. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09640568.2021.1974361>
- Sadeek, S., Chakrabarti, D., Papathanasiou, M. M., & Ward, K. (2023). Optimizing the sustainable energy transition: A case study on Trinidad and Tobago. *Chemical Engineering Research & Design: Transactions of the Institution of Chemical Engineers Part A*, 192, 194–207. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cherd.2023.02.020>
- Savelyeva, T., & Park, J. (2022). Blockchain technology for sustainable education. *British Journal of Educational Technology*, 53(6), 1591–1604. <https://doi.org/10.1111/bjet.13273>
- Schlör, H., & Schubert, S. A. (2022). SDG 8 and the food–energy–water nexus: A two-country dynamic computable general equilibrium CGE model. *Energy, Sustainability and Society*, 12(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13705-022-00369-x>
- Schlosser, P., Rockström, J., Edwards, C., Mirazo, P., Heilemann, A., Niklas H. Kitzmann, & Krobjinski, S. L. (2023). Accelerating transformations for a just, sustainable future: 10 ‘Must Haves.’ *Global Sustainability*, 6. <https://doi.org/10.1017/sus.2023.14>
- Sen, K., Qadeer, I., & Missoni, E. (2022). Understanding the Context of Global Health Policies: Their Post-Colonial. *World Review of Political Economy*, 13(3), 322–343.

- ABI/INFORM Collection; Political Science Database; ProQuest Central; Social Science Database. <https://doi.org/10.13169/worlrevipoliecon.13.3.0322>
- Shanthosh, J., Keerthi, M., Woodward, M., Vijayarasa, R., & Palagyi, A. (2022). Assessing the Reach, Scope and Outcomes of Government Action on Women's Health and Human Rights: A Protocol for the Development of an International Women's Rights Dataset. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 21. ProQuest Central; Social Science Database. <https://doi.org/10.1177/16094069221114741>
- Shevchenko, H., Petrushenko, M., Burkynskyi, B., & Khumarova, N. (2021). SDGs and the ability to manage change within the European green deal: The case of Ukraine. *Problems and Perspectives in Management*, 19(1), 53–67. [https://doi.org/10.21511/ppm.19\(1\).2021.05](https://doi.org/10.21511/ppm.19(1).2021.05)
- Singh, S., & Jayaram, R. (2022). Attainment of the sustainable development goal of poverty eradication: A review, critique, and research agenda. *Journal of Public Affairs*, 22(1). Scopus. <https://doi.org/10.1002/pa.2294>
- Sompolska-Rzechuła, A., & Kurdyś-Kujawska, A. (2021). Towards Understanding Interactions between Sustainable Development Goals: The Role of Climate-Well-Being Linkages. Experiences of EU Countries. *Energies*, 14(7), 2025. <https://doi.org/10.3390/en14072025>
- Stepanek Lockhart, A. (2022). Bringing together monitoring approaches to track progress on adult learning and education across main international policy tools. *International Review of Education / Internationale Zeitschrift Für Erziehungswissenschaft*, 68(2), 309–328. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11159-022-09947-9>
- Stevenson, S., Collins, A., Jennings, N., Köberle, A. C., Laumann, F., Laverty, A. A., Vineis, P., Woods, J., & Gambhir, A. (2021). Correction to: A hybrid approach to identifying and assessing interactions between climate action (SDG13) policies and a range of SDGs in a UK context. *Discover Sustainability*, 2(1). Scopus. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s43621-021-00061-8>
- Šuligoj, M., & Kennell, J. (2022). The role of dark commemorative and sport events in peaceful coexistence in the Western Balkans. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 30(2/3), 408–426. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09669582.2021.1938090>
- Tweneboah-Koduah, D., Lobnibe Arah, M., & Botchway, T. P. (2023). Globalization, renewable energy consumption and sustainable development. *Cogent Social Sciences*, 9(1). ProQuest Central; Social Science Database. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2023.2223399>
- Vera, I., Wicke, B., Lamers, P., Cowie, A., Repo, A., Heukels, B., Zumpf, C., Styles, D., Parish, E., Cherubini, F., Berndes, G., Jager, H., Schiesari, L., Junginger, M., Brandão, M., Bentsen, N. S., Daioglou, V., Harris, Z., & van der Hilst, F. (2022). Land use for bioenergy: Synergies and trade-offs between sustainable development goals. *Renewable & Sustainable Energy Reviews*, 161, 112409. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.rser.2022.112409>
- Viana, L., Rampasso, I. S., Pavan Serafim, M., Quelhas, O. L. G., Leal Filho, W., & Anholon, R. (2023). Critical analysis of the role of junior enterprises in the training of future professionals aligned with the SDG: an exploratory study considering Brazilian HEI. *International Journal of Sustainability in Higher Education*, 24(2), 502–516. Scopus. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJSHE-08-2021-0358>
- Wang, S., Abbas, J., Al-Sulati, K. I., & Shah, S. A. R. (2023). The Impact of Economic Corridor and Tourism on Local Community's Quality of Life under One Belt One Road Context. *Evaluation Review*, 1. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0193841x231182749>

- Wynn, M. G., & Jones, P. (2022). ICTs and the Localisation of the Sustainable Development Goals. *International Journal of Social Ecology and Sustainable Development*, 13(4). Scopus. <https://doi.org/10.4018/IJSESD.290325>
- Yeboah, G. A., Acheampong, K., & Ebbey, P. H. (2022). Sino-Africa Relations and Implications for Neo-Colonialism: A Case of China's Involvement in Ghana's Textiles and Mining Industries and its Implications in Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in Ghana. *Africana Studia*, 38, 39–53. <https://doi.org/10.21747/0874-2375/afr38a3>
- Zhu, J., Zhai, Y., Feng, S., Tan, Y., & Wei, W. (2022). Trade-offs and synergies among air-pollution-related SDGs as well as interactions between air-pollution-related SDGs and other SDGs. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 331, 129890. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2021.129890>

Appendix 3

Table 2 Included articles by thematic group

Inclusion Criteria	Articles identified via databases and registers	Articles identified via other methods
1: Tourism	Eger et al., 2022; Glyptou, 2022; Rajani & Boluk, 2022; n = 3	n = 0
2: Technology	Alexander et al., 2022; Mutung'u, 2022; Rocha de Siqueira & Ramalho, 2022; n = 3	n = 0
3: Environment	Akestoridi & Seatzu, 2021; Alexander et al., 2022; Arora-Jonsson, 2023; Choudhary, 2023; Eger et al., 2022; Fonjong & Gyapong, 2021; Galbiati et al., 2022; Glyptou, 2022; Hope, 2021; Krause & Tilker, 2022; Moreno et al., 2023; Ward et al., 2022; n = 12	n = 0
4: Inclusion	Amanuma et al., 2023; Annan-Aggrey et al., 2022; Brockwell et al., 2022; Butcher, 2022; Fahed & Daou, 2021; Frank & Mattioli, 2023; Galbiati et al., 2022; Hausteim & Tomalin, 2021; Hope, 2022; Immler & Sackers, 2022; Krauss, 2022; Mariano & Molari, 2022; McIlwaine et al., 2023; Novovic, 2023; Roy et al., 2022; Vaitsman et al., 2023; Vijayarasa & Liu, 2022; n = 17	n = 0
5: Alternative perspectives	Caria, 2022; Das & Albinsson, 2023; de Castro & Yu, 2023; Griffiths, 2021; Halliki & Aigner, 2022; Hausteim & Tomalin, 2021; Hope, 2021; Hope, 2022; Ijjas, 2021; Krauss, 2022; Larsen et al., 2022; Nagati et al., 2023; Okeke, 2021; Santos & Mourato, 2022; Mutung'u, 2022; Taggart, 2022; Tichenor et al., 2022; Vogt, 2022; Voulvoulis et al., 2022; Vu & Long, 2023; n = 20	Olwig, 2021a; Olwig, 2021b; Perry, 2021; Telleria & Garcia-Arias, 2022; n = 4

Table 3 Included articles by approach group

Inclusion Criteria	Articles identified via databases and registers	Articles identified via other methods
A: Systemic or structural critique	Akestoridi & Seatzu, 2021; Arora-Jonsson, 2023; Caria, 2022; Choudhary, 2023; Das & Albinsson, 2023; de Castro & Yu, 2023; Eger et al., 2022; Fonjong & Gyapong, 2021; Griffiths, 2021; Halliki & Aigner, 2022; Hope, 2021, 2022; Krauss, 2022; Larsen et al., 2022; Mariano & Molari, 2022; Mutung'u, 2022; Okeke, 2021; Roy et al., 2022; Santos & Mourato, 2022; Tichenor et al., 2022; Vogt, 2022; Voulvoulis et al., 2022; Vu & Long, 2023; n = 23	Olwig, 2021a; Olwig, 2021b; Perry, 2021; Telleria & Garcia-Arias, 2022; n = 4
B: Optimization	Alexander et al., 2022; Amanuma et al., 2023; Annan-Aggrey et al., 2022; Brockwell et al., 2022; Butcher, 2022; Fahed & Daou, 2021; Frank & Mattioli, 2023; Galbiati et al., 2022; Glyptou, 2022; Hausteim & Tomalin, 2021; Ijjas, 2021; Immler & Sackers, 2022; Krause & Tilker, 2022; McIlwaine et al., 2023; Moreno et al., 2023; Nagati et al., 2023; Novovic, 2023; Rajani & Boluk, 2022; Rocha de Siqueira & Ramalho, 2022; Taggart, 2022; Vaitsman et al., 2023; Vijayarasa & Liu, 2022; Ward et al., 2022; n = 23	n = 0