

SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS PRACTICES IN DEVELOPING ECONOMICS - DECOLONIZING THE SDGS

SCOPE AND CONTENT

This book explores the intersection of sustainability and business practices in developing economies, focusing on innovative strategies that contribute to and critically engage with relevant Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Unlike existing works that focus primarily on policy recommendations, this aims to inject genuinely novel perspectives by combining theoretical frameworks with practical, results-driven applications, innovation and specific technological applications like AI-powered resource management for agriculture, blockchain for transparent supply chains, and mobile fintech for clean energy access as key drivers of sustainable transformation, showcasing community-driven and locally adapted solutions that enhance resilience and promote inclusive growth in regions of increasing global economic and environmental significance. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for addressing global challenges such as climate change and resource scarcity, as developing economies often face disproportionate impacts and offer unique insights into adaptation and mitigation strategies.

The book takes a critical stance toward mainstream sustainability narratives and the global SDG framework. It moves beyond conventional CSR rhetoric, tokenistic sustainability practices, and unchecked SDG optimism to interrogate whether global initiatives truly align with local realities in developing economies. Through grounded critique, it explores how the SDG agenda may reinforce top-down, one-size-fits-all models that inadequately reflect the socio-political and economic diversity of the Global South. Rather than celebrating the SDGs uncritically, the book questions their operational feasibility, coherence, and embedded structural limitations, offering equity-driven and context-sensitive alternatives that challenge normative frameworks and conventional wisdom.

Central to the book is a candid examination of the structural barriers that hinder effective SDG implementation in developing regions. It engages with the persistent governance deficits, weak institutional frameworks, political instability, and funding gaps that limit the capacity of businesses and states alike. The analysis recognizes the systemic nature of these constraints, including deeply entrenched inequalities in global governance and access to resources, and aims to present a balanced picture - acknowledging both the aspirations and the real-world limitations of SDG-driven strategies, potentially uncovering novel, context-specific sustainability concepts in the process such as community-driven circularity models rooted in local resource availability or resilience frameworks informed by indigenous ecological knowledge.

In addressing innovation, the book focuses on how emerging technologies and novel business models are reshaping the sustainability landscape in developing countries. It explores the transformative potential of tools such as AI for localized climate risk prediction tailored to the vulnerabilities of smallholder farmers, blockchain for ethical sourcing and traceability in agricultural value chains, fintech platforms for micro-investments in decentralized renewable energy projects in remote areas, and data analytics for optimizing resource use in rapidly

urbanizing informal settlements, but in terms of their local applicability and potential to scale context-specific solutions. It also examines regenerative and circular economy models tailored to low-resource environments, assessing their ability to move businesses beyond sustainability toward ecosystem restoration and long-term resilience. The discussion is rooted in real examples and critically assesses how such innovations can both empower and challenge existing power dynamics.

The book's theoretical foundation is grounded in decolonial thought and critical sustainability studies. It draws from decolonial theory to highlight how knowledge production, sustainability discourse, and implementation models are often shaped by colonial legacies and northern-centric paradigms. Rather than reproducing dominant frameworks, the book centres grassroots approaches, localized epistemologies, and pluriverse thinking to reimagine sustainability as a more inclusive and transformative pursuit, potentially leading to the articulation of new, decolonially informed sustainability concepts. These perspectives allow the book to move beyond normative development theory and offer a fresh lens through which sustainability transitions can be understood and enacted.

By bridging research and practice, this volume plays a crucial role in connecting academic inquiry with actionable strategies. It combines scholarly analysis with grounded case studies, enabling readers to engage with both conceptual debates and real-world applications. The book is designed not only for academics, but also for practitioners, policymakers, and educators seeking implementable insights. Through critical reflection, empirical evidence, and practical guidance, it challenges dominant paradigms and proposes new and potentially disruptive pathways for sustainable business in the Global South. Ultimately, it offers a roadmap for moving from ambition to action - toward sustainability practices that are both transformative and just.

PARTICULAR BENEFITS

The book fills a critical gap in the literature by exploring how businesses in developing regions can effectively integrate SDGs into their strategies. It offers significant benefits to academia, policymakers, and practitioners by presenting a multidisciplinary approach that encompasses economic, environmental, and social dimensions of sustainability (Elkington, 1997). With a well-structured format that includes real-world case studies and actionable frameworks (Epstein & Buhovac, 2014), the book serves as a practical guide for stakeholders seeking sustainable growth solutions. By addressing pressing challenges and highlighting successful models, it provides a valuable resource for fostering informed decision-making and promoting sustainable business practices (Pedersen, 2018).

Designed to be both comprehensive and action-oriented, this book caters to a diverse audience. Its blend of theoretical insights and practical application also makes it highly suitable for MBA programs and executive training courses focused on sustainable business and development. For academia, it delivers theoretical insights and empirical research on sustainability challenges and solutions in emerging economies, while grounding these insights in the critical need to protect planetary health (Myers & Frumkin, 2020) and envision a sustainable future for all (Randers et al., 2022). For business practitioners and policymakers, it offers concrete, scalable

strategies for embedding SDGs into corporate decision-making, encompassing governance structures and financial mechanisms that support sustainability transitions, and pushes beyond traditional capitalistic models to envision a reimaged system that prioritizes sustainability (Henderson, 2020). These strategies will be presented through actionable frameworks, such as a step-by-step guide for integrating circular economy principles into supply chains in resource-constrained environments and a methodology for assessing the social and environmental impact of technology adoption.

Recognizing the practical difficulties in operationalizing SDGs, especially in contexts with governance and infrastructural gaps, the book explores both enablers and inhibitors of sustainable business practices. The case studies will specifically analyze the business case for sustainability initiatives, including potential cost savings, revenue generation opportunities, and enhanced stakeholder relationships.

Building on the understanding that sustainable value creation is integral to business strategy (Bertels, 2021) and that enterprises must move beyond profits to purpose (Laszlo, 2022), the book integrates perspectives from business, economics, environmental studies, and public policy, ensuring interdisciplinary relevance.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

What innovative strategies can businesses adopt to integrate sustainability into their operations while contributing to the achievement of SDGs? How can developing countries overcome the key barriers hindering the adoption of sustainable business practices? What is the specific role of businesses in driving sustainable development within resource-limited settings? What are the primary challenges and opportunities associated with adopting sustainable practices in emerging markets? How do innovation and technology contribute to the achievement of sustainability goals in a business context within developing economies?

To what extent are the SDGs realistically attainable through business strategies, considering the structural and systemic limitations prevalent in developing economies? How can regenerative and circular economy models be effectively adapted and implemented in low-resource settings? What role can decentralized technologies (e.g., blockchain) play in enabling sustainable supply chains within emerging markets? In what ways are indigenous practices and local innovations shaping novel and contextually relevant pathways to sustainability in developing countries?

To what extent do current sustainability and SDG frameworks reflect Western-centric or normative assumptions that may not be suitable for diverse local contexts in the Global South? How do critiques of the SDG agenda (e.g., concerns about greenwashing, superficial compliance, global inequality) inform the development of more grounded and effective sustainability approaches in developing countries? How are the unique socio-economic and ecological contexts of developing countries fostering the emergence of novel conceptualizations of sustainability that diverge from traditional Western-centric models? What specific technological adaptations and innovations are proving most effective in advancing sustainable business practices and achieving SDGs within resource-constrained

environments? How can decentralized technologies be leveraged to foster more inclusive and sustainable development pathways in the Global South?

ENGAGED UNITED NATIONS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

The book directly engages with following UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):

Goal 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth: By exploring strategies for sustainable and inclusive economic growth in developing economies.

Goal 9: Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure: By addressing innovative approaches to building resilient and sustainable industrial and infrastructural systems.

Goal 12: Responsible Consumption and Production: By presenting frameworks for businesses to adopt responsible resource management and sustainable production practices.

Goal 13: Climate Action: By emphasizing strategies for reducing carbon footprints and promoting environmental sustainability in business operations.

The book provides actionable insights and strategies to help businesses align their operations with these goals, fostering sustainable development in emerging economies.

PROPOSED CONTENT

The edited book will be organized into various sections: Foundations of Sustainability in Business, Theoretical Perspectives and Frameworks, Practical Insights and Case Studies, Policy and Technological Enablers, and Future Perspectives. Each chapter will combine theoretical analyses, practical insights, and real-world applications, providing a comprehensive resource for understanding and advancing sustainability in business practices. The following proposed chapter themes highlight the scope of the book:

1. Overview of Sustainability in Business and Its Relevance in Developing Economies:

Explores the increasing significance of sustainability in business and its role in fostering economic, social, and environmental progress in developing regions. Contributions to this chapter should critically assess the current state of sustainability implementation and may address overarching governance challenges and funding limitations impacting progress.

2. Contextualizing the SDGs for Innovative Business in Developing Economies:

This chapter provides a concise overview of the key Sustainable Development Goals directly relevant to the innovative business strategies explored in this book within the context of developing economies. It will critically examine the specific challenges and opportunities these contexts present for SDG implementation and lay the groundwork for subsequent chapters that delve into practical applications and case studies.

3. Theoretical Frameworks for Sustainability in Business:

Provides insights from management and economic theories to conceptualize and frame sustainability strategies for businesses. While exploring theoretical underpinnings, contributors are encouraged to critically evaluate their applicability in developing economies, considering governance structures and financial implications.

- 4. Regenerative and Circular Business Models in Emerging Economies:** Examines innovative business models that prioritize regeneration and circularity, emphasizing sustainability integration in the context of emerging economies, including the exploration of indigenous practices that embody regenerative principles and the development of context-specific circular economy models. Analyses should critically assess the feasibility and scalability of these models, addressing potential governance hurdles and funding requirements for their successful implementation.
- 5. Case Studies - Successful Implementations of SDG-Focused Strategies in Developing Countries:** Showcases real-world examples of businesses that have successfully incorporated SDGs into their operations, highlighting best practices and lessons learned. Case studies should not only celebrate successes but also critically examine the role of governance and funding in enabling or hindering these outcomes.
- 6. Barriers and Critiques of Sustainability in Business Practices:** This chapter critically analyses structural and institutional challenges to implementing sustainable practices in developing economies, while critically engaging with debates on the limitations of the SDG framework and mainstream sustainability narratives. This chapter inherently addresses the critical perspective but should also explicitly explore the interplay of governance deficits and funding gaps as key barriers.
- 7. Policy Implications: Role of Governments and Policymakers in Supporting Sustainable Business Initiatives:** Analyzes the impact of government policies and support mechanisms in driving sustainable business practices. This chapter will directly address the role of governance but should also explicitly consider the financial mechanisms and funding policies that are most effective.
- 8. Technological Leapfrogging and Digital Sustainability in the Global South:** Examines how innovation and technology, such as mobile-based platforms for sustainable agriculture, AI-driven environmental monitoring systems, and blockchain-enabled renewable energy microgrids, enable businesses in developing countries to achieve sustainability goals through transformative, scalable solutions. Contributions should critically evaluate the accessibility and governance of these technologies, as well as the funding required for their adoption and scaling in developing economies.
- 9. Future Trends in Sustainable Business Practices: Discusses** emerging trends, including new business models and technologies shaping the future of sustainability. Analyses of future trends should critically consider potential governance implications and the financial landscapes that will shape their adoption in developing countries.
- 10. Integrating SDGs into Business Practices - Lessons and Directions:** Reflects on the evolving role of businesses in achieving the SDGs and offers a roadmap for future efforts to integrate sustainability into business practices. This concluding chapter should critically synthesize the lessons learned, including the persistent challenges related to governance and funding, and offer future directions that address these issues.
- 11. Emerging Trends and New Frontiers in Business Sustainability:** Explores next-generation sustainability tools (e.g., machine learning for climate risk modelling), trends

in ESG investments, regenerative business models, and decentralized governance mechanisms for sustainability (e.g., DAOs for SDG funding) and considers how these trends might contribute to the emergence of novel sustainability frameworks and concepts relevant to the Global South. This chapter already touches on governance and funding but should ensure a critical lens is applied to the feasibility and implications of these trends in developing economies.

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