

Social work promoting community and environmental sustainability: A workbook for global social workers and educators (Volume 3)

Edited by: Michaela Rinkel and [Meredith Powers](#)

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Abstract:

Around the world social workers are coming alongside communities that are unfairly impacted by climate injustices and helping to create solutions. In these roles, we must consider the opportunities of promoting community and environmental sustainability, *within and beyond* the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). While we need to be well versed in the language and concepts and be involved in conversations and actions with global partners for the SDGs, we must maintain a critical eye on the limitations of this framework and help shift the conversation towards real solutions (i.e., which can be sustained in the long term). We maintain that this shift involves embracing an ecosocial worldview and taking a degrowth approach for transformational alternatives to sustainable development.

This volume of the workbook series is thus, an attempt to demonstrate to the profession our relevance to the SDGs, as well as to demonstrate to the world that social work is essential to the realization of sustainability, *within and beyond* the SDGs. This book is intended as a tool for international social work practitioners, students, and educators to help advance the *Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development* theme of “working toward environmental sustainability”. It is the third volume in the series and is formatted as a workbook, with short lessons and exercises to help you apply the lessons theoretically and in your own practice. These lessons could apply to research, policy, ethics, practice, theory, interdisciplinary work, and more. Whether you are a longtime supporter of social workers investing in social and environmental sustainability work, or if you are new and curious about the topic, we hope this resource will inspire and equip you.

Keywords: social work | environmental sustainability | sustainable development | environmentalism | social workers

Book:

***Note: Full text below



SOCIAL WORK

**PROMOTING COMMUNITY &
ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY:**

**A Workbook for Global
Social Workers & Educators**



Edited by Michaela Rinkel & Meredith Powers

VOLUME 3

**Social Work Promoting
Community and
Environmental Sustainability:
A Workbook for Global Social
Workers and Educators**

Volume 3

Edited by Michaela Rinkel and Meredith Powers

The International Federation of Social Workers



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Acknowledgements



“Selah” the Snail

The Hebrew word, “Selah” is understood to denote a pause. The snail has been a source of delight and inspiration to many as we seek to slow our own life-pace. The degrowth movement has utilized the snail to represent the transformational shift in our collective life-pace. We have also used it on the front cover, adding it to the SDGs’ color wheel logo.

The acknowledgements in a book represent a moment to pause, to take stock of all that went into the process of creating a book and to show appreciation to those involved. It often is a pause appreciated only by the authors/editors, as perhaps the audience may prefer to skip it in order to get to the “good stuff” of the book. But we hope you will take a moment to pause with us to see that this is also the “good stuff”. In fact, ***the pause is the whole point of this book. Selah.***

First, we want to acknowledge and thank Mother Earth, who not only supplies our every need, but invites us to adopt her life-pace. As the famous Chinese philosopher Lao Tzu noted, “Nature does not hurry, yet everything is accomplished.” Additionally, we want to show our appreciation to all the species and to the spirits of the land, air, water, and fire, that together with humans make up the delicate Web of Life. *Selah.*

We are thankful to have had the opportunity and privilege to transition to a slower life-pace. This has meant the ***slowing of our pace***, both professionally, as we deepened our understanding of degrowth and tried to incorporate it into our scholarship, and

personally, as we sought to degrow our agendas so that we could enjoy a “sustainable, life-enhancing pace.”¹ *Selah.*

We additionally want to thank each of the contributing authors, who not only paused to take the time to write such incredible content for their chapters in this book, but who were also patient with us as we paused to explore the new direction of this third volume and to cultivate our ideas. We acknowledge that this process has been slower for us than we had originally expected. It turns out that the concepts of degrowth are challenging for those of us situated in cultures so fully immersed in the growth ideology. We had to pause to take time to contemplate, wrestle with, and let the ideas simmer as we attempted to form a deeper and richer contribution to the social work profession. *Selah.*

We also want to take a moment to express our tremendous gratitude to Dr. Jef Peeters, whose deep body of scholarship over many decades has inspired, challenged, and motivated us to integrate the degrowth approach as the key focus of this third volume. He not only contributed as a co-author (to Meredith on Chapter 8), but he also mentored us as we cultivated our own understanding of these concepts. He even offered his expertise as a peer reviewer of our overview. We are grateful for his sharp intellect and his willingness to live what he professes, as he generously shared his knowledge and invited us to create and contribute to the knowledge commons. We could not have done this book without him. *Selah.*

And, finally, we want to thank Dr. Andreas Rechkemmer, who paused amidst his robust and busy schedule to write the Foreword to this third volume. His expertise and long-standing activism through his work on policy, research and as an educator, both within and beyond the UN Sustainable Development Goals are a source of hope and inspiration. We are thankful to him for sharing his perspective with us and for helping us move the conversation forward. *Selah.*

From Michaela:

For so many years now, my relationship with social work has been central to my identity. With so much seeming to need attention, I find it hard to not throw myself headlong into the wind. A recent conversation with a colleague helped me to solidify the slow shift that I've been making. I've misunderstood the Pareto Principle all these years, that when applied to work productivity states that 20% of people do 80% of the work. I've always thought the admirable thing to do was to be on the side of the 20%, but is it? *Selah.*

Thank you to Meredith, for being, once again, just the right person to partner with in this creation. When writing a Volume 3 of a series, it should be a piece of cake as we have nailed down the process. However, this process was exhausting, because you challenged so many assumptions and insisted on slowing the pace to be true to what we were considering. Because of this, the end is better than I imagined. Thank you for the struggle. *Selah.*

Finally, my deepest gratitude to Cindy for her ability to keep what's truly important in the fore. I have much to learn. *Selah.*

From Meredith:

First, I want to express my love and appreciation to my family (Kevin, Kaia, and our puppy, Obi, and my amazing parents). They are the "bigger yes" that I get to say "yes" to, when I actually slow my agenda and say "no" to other things. It is a privilege and a joy to grow in wonder and hope alongside them. *Selah.*

I want to thank my friend and colleague, Pascal Rudin, who first suggested the explicit challenge that I should, "degrow my agenda, not myself". And, I am tremendously grateful for my colleague, friend, and kindred spirit, Dr. Sandra Engstrom. For years, we both had thought about, tried to implement, and taught about a sustainable, life-enhancing pace. However, until we finally wrestled through it in order to write it all down in our (upcoming) article, "Radical Self-care for Social Workers in the Global Climate Crisis"¹, it never quite took

effect in my own life. Indeed, many friends and family had suggested, to no avail, that I slow down. Finally, with Pascal and Sandra's encouragement and accountability, I feel like I am now beginning to truly live my best life. *Selah.*

I want to always pause to remember my professor, mentor, and friend, Dee Gamble, who first introduced me to the concepts of sustainable development in a social work class during my master's program. Without her guidance, I don't know what path I would be on today as a social worker. Additionally, I want to thank Dr. Robin Wall Kimmerer. While I have not yet had the pleasure of meeting her personally, a colleague recommended to me her book, [*Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants*](#)². In it (and through her voice in the audio book version) I have found such a touching source of healing that reached my own deepening eco-grief and fostered my resilience to continue working on this challenging topic. Her book also offered me the insight into an alternative worldview than the one in which I had grown up. As I seek to embrace the ecosocial worldview, I am indebted to those, such as Dr. Robin Wall Kimmerer, who take the time to share their worldviews and inspiring stories. *Selah.*

As always, I want to thank my dear friend and colleague, Dr. Rory Truell, for not only inviting us to publish this workbook series with IFSW, but for also wrestling with me on what an ecosocial worldview means to the global profession of social work. He has touched my life with intrigue and inspiration as I continue my journey of becoming a social worker and all that this means for me personally, as well as how I am able to use it to help shape the profession. I am thankful also for his willingness to partner with me on our upcoming textbook and for helping me realize my vision with the IFSW Climate Justice Program. *Selah.*

Finally, I want to express my extreme gratitude to Michaela, who invited me to co-edit the first workbook, not knowing she couldn't get rid of me that easily. Now we are amazingly completing our third

volume in three years, with plans for other future collaborations. Thank you for your extreme patience with me on this third volume, as I slowed my agenda in order to absorb, process, and apply all that I was learning with the degrowth approach of a sustainable, life-enhancing pace, personally and professionally. I am so appreciative of our easy-going and naturally flowing relationship; like scissors, we sharpen each other as we cut through all the crap that our original worldviews had us interpreting as truth. I'm so thankful to have you as my partner in learning and in shaping the profession together. *Selah.*

Resources:

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2. Wall Kimmerer, R. (2013). [*Braiding sweetgrass: Indigenous wisdom, scientific knowledge, and the teachings of plants.*](#) Milkweed Editions.

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Dedication

We dedicate this resource to all who suffer from climate injustices, past, present, and future. We acknowledge our privilege of being personally insulated enough from these injustices that we are able to spend time reflecting on and writing about them. We hope that these thoughts and words inspire others to action, so that together we can transform our world.

Foreword

By Andreas Rechkemmer

Author Biography:

Dr. Andreas Rechkemmer is a Professor of Global and Sustainable Development Policy in the College of Public Policy at Hamad Bin Khalifa University, Doha, Qatar. He previously held the position of American Humane Endowed Chair and Professor in the Graduate School of Social Work at the University of Denver where he also led the School's MSW Concentration in Sustainable Development and Global Practice. Andreas is a former senior official of the United Nations where, among other appointments, he was the Executive Director of the United Nations University's International Human Dimensions Programme on Global Environmental Change. In this capacity he contributed to the development of the SDG framework as well as other UN assessments and policy documents. Andreas is the author and editor of multiple books, chapters, articles and peer-reviewed academic journals and policy briefs. He is the Senior Editor of the Sustainable Development in the 21st Century book series.

**"You must unite behind the science. You must take action.
You must do the impossible. Because giving up can never ever be
an option."
~Greta Thunberg**

For the most part, the hard science of climate change and many other phenomena of global environmental change more broadly, is settled. There is overwhelming evidence and agreement among scientists regarding the anthropogenic drivers, facets, and impacts of environmental change. This is due to the most comprehensive, rigorous, and fulminant peer-reviewed scientific assessment ever undertaken in history, which has led to numerous reports of the

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, the Stern Review, or the publications surrounding the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). While anthropogenic environmental change is characterized by a high level of complexity, ambiguity and uncertainty, it is absolutely certain that these changes are underway, are increasing and expanding rapidly, and come with dramatic and often apocalyptic consequences for humans, non-human animals, ecosystems and planetary systems alike.

With so much data, evidence and knowledge at hand it should be possible to embark on swift and bold action: to inform, design and implement far-reaching and effective policies, laws and regulations, radically change business incentives and market mechanisms, and bring about significant and lasting social change. And yet, many of the state and non-state actors that could effectively do something about it - Western liberal democracies, the OECD world (aka major carbon emitters) and transnational corporations, are faced with a global crisis of reason, truth, and values - even the most basic ones. Similar to the *Tragedy of the Commons*, the information age seems to come with record levels of misinformation, disinformation and fake news, all eroding the public trust in science, the media, and government and thus threatening some of the very principles of our societies, and the *social contract*.

This is the hour of enlightened social action for change, of resistance, of a powerful social movement everywhere, of loudly speaking truth to power, arrogance and ignorance. It is in this time of crisis, chaos and denial in which the science and profession of social work can step up to play a critically important role worldwide. Social workers are uniquely skilled and placed to unite where division reigns, to heal where trauma spreads, to assert where doubts prevent action, to give hope where resignation wins, and to ignite social movements and catalyze action for change. It is encouraging to see the rapidly growing numbers of social workers who place the true notion of the *person-in-environment* paradigm at the center of their scientific and

professional interest and give priority to the green, ecological and environmental dimensions of social work. A new generation of students, teachers, and practitioners of social work understand that human wellbeing, human, social and economic development, social justice and human rights are inextricably linked with the wellbeing and functioning of our natural environment, of ecosystems, planetary systems such as climate, water and biodiversity, and the wellbeing and capabilities of non-human animals.

The International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) is to be praised for being an inspiring leader in this field and for supporting, publishing and promoting the formidable workbook series *Social Work - Promoting Community and Environmental Sustainability* by editors Meredith Powers and Michaela Rinkel. The third volume of the series focuses on the role and potential of the UN SDGs and the concept of Degrowth. The international community is fortunate to have and be able to refer to the SDG agenda as a comprehensive, robust framework to inform about the most pressing socio-ecological challenges in today's world, to guide meaningful collective action by identifying key goals and targets, and, perhaps most importantly, to provide a reliable system of metrics, benchmarks and indicators through which action against the goals can be measured and assessed worldwide. The SDGs, though the result of intergovernmental negotiations, were built on a solid foundation of grassroots level and participatory surveying, observations, and consultations, including many non-governmental and community actors as well as the global scientific community. It may not be the best of all possible agendas for a global approach to socio-ecological change, but the SDGs are the best one we currently have. Similarly, the concept of Degrowth, while it may still show academic limitations, is rapidly experiencing refinement through peer reviewed research and practice and is an important and powerful agenda for thinking differently and enacting change. Not only at the microeconomic and political economy levels, but, perhaps most importantly, to help overcome and transform the prevailing popular myth that human wellbeing and development and economic growth are inextricably linked.

By connecting the Sustainable Development Goals with Degrowth, and by linking both to the contemporary agenda of the international profession of social work, the editors provide for a significant and much needed contribution to the profession. Uniting behind the science, encouraging and empowering people to take action, spreading hope, daring to do the impossible... who can do that if not social workers?

Preface

Reframing the Global Conversation of Social Work and the Sustainable Development Goals

By *Michaela Rinkel and Meredith C. F. Powers*

Authors' Biographies:

Michaela Rinkel, PhD, MSW is an associate professor and the BSW program director at Hawai'i Pacific University, USA. Her research interests include the intersection of social sustainability and social work, spirituality and social work practice, the development of curricular resources to support the integration of sustainability in social work education, and the importance of culture and localization to sustainability. Email: mrinkel@hpu.edu

Meredith C.F. Powers, PhD, MSW, is an assistant professor at the University of North Carolina, Greensboro, USA. Her current research includes the professional socialization of social workers, university-community partnerships for sustainability, climate justice, and environmental refugees. She is the founder and director of the [IFSW Climate Justice Program](#). She also established and co-administers the growing, online network: 'Green/Ecosocial Work Collaborative Network'. She serves as a member of the Environmental Justice Committee for the Council on Social Work Education, and the Grand Challenges for Social Work committee, 'Create Social Responses to a Changing Environment'. Among other engagements, Dr. Powers was recently invited to speak at the United Nations on climate justice and sustainability as part of the annual World Social Work Day event. Email: MCFPowers@UNCG.edu

We are thrilled, once again, to create a platform that highlights the important and inspiring work of social workers around the world. We have chosen to launch this third volume on Human Rights Day, 2019, as we recognize that we cannot have human rights without ecological

rights. Some understand human rights from a narrower, human-centered view as they focus on people's rights to a safe, clean, and healthy environment to further the livelihoods, health, and well-being of our own species. We instead promote embracing a broader understanding of ecological rights, within an [ecosocial worldview](#)¹ which acknowledges that humans are NOT the 'top of the nature pyramid', rather humans *are* nature; we are a part of a large and complex Web of Life. From this ecosocial worldview, ecological rights means establishing and ensuring the rights of all sentient and non-sentient beings, and the entire ecosystem; this is not merely for the benefit of humans, but in and of their own right to thrive and to maintain well-being. Focusing on ecological rights utilizes the type of long-term, systems thinking that a human-centric rights perspective has, at times, ignored. For more on ecological rights, the reader is referred to the Foreword to [Volume 2](#) written by Miriama Scott, Chapter 5 in [Volume 1](#) by Paula Sousa and José Luis Almeida, along with various other chapters in all three volumes of this workbook series.

We are privileged to again showcase the work of Martha Rothblum on the cover to this volume. The artwork is an original piece that reflects the complexity of this moment in our history. The opposite facing profiles represent both our need to be vigilant, eyeing the future, while simultaneously calling upon the learnings from the past; as well as the clash of ideologies of sustainability that frame this volume. These ideologies, one of sustainable development within the growth ideology and one of the degrowth lens, call for opposing solutions and lead us on very different paths. This juxtaposition is further acknowledged by the graphic of the snail, a symbol of the degrowth movement, that we intentionally placed within the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) color wheel logo in order to highlight the need to reexamine the SDGs in light of the principles of the degrowth approach.

We began discussing how we might use the SDGs as a possible focus for framing the chapters in Volume 3 of this workbook series. We

presented on this at the SWSD Joint World Congress in Dublin, Ireland in 2018, where we also launched Volume 2, alongside many of the authors from the whole workbook series. However, in considering this structure for Volume 3, we began a journey of considerable research and deliberation as we set out to better understand sustainable development, in general, and the UN's SDGs specifically. While there are obvious and abounding connections of continual social work action as the SDGs map onto the entire [*The Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development: Commitment to Action \(Global Agenda, 2010-2020\)*](#)² quite nicely, we offer a critique of sustainable development and the SDGs from a degrowth perspective as a way to reframe the conversation as we shift to an ecosocial worldview.

Degrowth is a term for a vast array of concepts that offers an alternative to sustainable development. Sustainable development is situated in the anthropogenic, capitalist growth economic paradigm or growth ideology, and the degrowth approach questions this paradigm and calls for a paradigm shift to an ecosocial worldview, which leads to a real sustainable path that does not keep perpetuating the unsustainable and unjust byproducts of growth. Sustainable development is a conundrum, as it is impossible to keep developing in a growth economic model and achieve true sustainability; we will discuss this further in the Overview of this workbook.

Development within the growth ideology that prompted the industrial revolution, was and continues to be the primary source of the problems that we work so diligently to alleviate (e.g., economic, political prosperity for a few at the expense of others and the environment). Sustainable Development was then put forth as a solution to the mere development model as a way to supposedly address these injustices. There is some debate on how to create prosperity for all if we do not keep developing. However, within a degrowth approach from an ecosocial worldview, natural resources are not considered resources merely for capital gain as commodities,

and prosperity is not only measured in economic terms, rather in meaning and quality. Thus, we believe the degrowth approach is the best path that offers true possibility of a legitimately sustainable future with climate justice for all (see Chapter 8 of this workbook for more on this).

Oddly, social work continues to situate itself in the structures that promote the growth model, thus becoming, perhaps unwittingly, part of the problem. In order to address the climate crisis, to promote community and environmental sustainability, and to seek climate justice, we must shift to a degrowth approach. Thus, while each of these chapters focuses on one or more aspects of the 17 SDGs, we also offer at the beginning of each chapter a brief summary of our editorial critique of the SDG framework, encouraging us to work ***within and beyond*** the SDGs. This is presented in the Overview chapter in full, as each chapter is able to stand alone for the audience to choose which parts of the workbook seem most relevant for them. The critique is not of the chapters' content or the authors' perspectives, but rather an attempt to add a degrowth lens as a frame to discuss the SDGs and the content in each chapter exploring the intersection between social work and each SDG.

Finally, we are grateful to the practitioners, researchers, and teachers who helped us learn, and we now offer this work to you as we continue to move the conversation forward. We acknowledge that social workers have been working on the interrelated and complex issues of the SDG's since the dawn of the profession, and that academia is slow to pick up on and disseminate best practice trends; indeed, we are a profession of not just "research-based practice" but "practice-based research and teaching". For more on the broad array of writings, including many early writings, on the intersection between the natural world and social work the reader is referred to literature reviews by [Kriings, Victor, Mathias & Perron \(2018\)](#),³ [Reyes Mason, Shire, Arwood, Borst \(2017\)](#),⁴ [Nöjd, 2017](#)⁵ and [Molyneux, R. \(2010\)](#)⁶.

How to Use this Book

The workbooks in this series are to be used as tools by audiences of international social work practitioners, students, and educators with the aim to advance *The Global Agenda*². The four themes of the *Global Agenda* are interwoven and all equally important for social work and social development: promoting social and economic equalities, promoting the dignity and worth of all peoples, working toward environmental sustainability, and strengthening recognition of the importance of human relationships.

This workbook series was created to be a digital, free, open access, dynamic, and interactive tool. Thus, you may download the workbooks in this series for free and use them as digital tools. If you decide to print, please consider sustainable printing options (e.g., recycled paper, double sided printing). In addition, this book is available for purchase as a printed copy, and we are pleased to note that they are printed on recycled paper (100% post-consumer waste).

We hope that you will find the entire book an interesting and helpful tool. However, we also designed it so that each chapter could stand alone and could be used individually as modules in formal courses or self-study on the array of topics covered. The book is in the style of a workbook, with short lessons and exercises that follow to help you apply the lesson theoretically and in thinking about your own practice. These lessons could apply to research, policy, ethics, practice, theory, interdisciplinary work, etc.

Each chapter begins with a brief biography of the contributing authors. These authors are from all over the world and bring with them their own unique experiences and expertise. There is a range of contributing authors from academics to practitioners; many chapters are co-authored by social workers along with those from other disciplines and/or community members. While we realize this volume is still not an exhaustive representation of all perspectives, nor of all the amazing work being done by social workers around the world on these issues, we hope this will at least serve to move the conversation forward. Also, the views and opinions in each chapter are of the

author(s) and do not necessarily represent those of the co-editors or the publisher. If anyone would like to discuss alternative viewpoints, please contact the authors; their contact information is provided with their biographies at the beginning of each chapter.

We thank the reader for learning with us, and we appreciate our international audience accommodating our collaborative book being offered in English, with limited chapter translations available at this time, as we do not have the capacity to publish the entire workbook series in multiple languages. We affirm that all languages are equal, and English is in no way superior to other languages, it simply happens to be our native language as the co-editors. We are grateful to the authors who have responded to our invitation to submit their translated chapters in their own native languages and we are pleased to provide them as part of the Appendix in this workbook.

We also want to offer an invitation to all social workers to join the 'Green/EcoSocial Work Network', an international, collaborative network for sharing ideas, resources, asking questions, and building solidarity around ways to address sustainability and ecological justice issues within our profession. To join the google group listserve, please contact the group's co-administrators: Meredith Powers at MCFPowers@UNCG.edu or Sandra Engstrom at sandra.engstrom@stir.ac.uk. There is also a Facebook group, [Ecologically Conscious Social Work](#), and a Twitter group, [Green and Environmental Social Work](#), if you would like to join these as well.

Finally, we are founding leaders of the [IFSW Climate Justice Program](#).⁷ Check it out when you have time, there are resources for education, advocacy and action, particularly for investing in climate justice projects as we redress our ecological footprints related to travel.

Resources:

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Overview

Social Work Promoting Community and Environmental Sustainability, within and beyond the UN Sustainable Development Goals: A Degrowth Critique

By Meredith C. F. Powers and Michaela Rinkel

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Lesson:

What is Water?

There is a parable that shares this story:

There are two young fish swimming along one day, and they come upon an older fish swimming the other way, who nods at them and says, “Good morning. How’s the water?” The two young fish greet the older fish and continue to swim on for a bit, and then eventually one of them looks over at the other and says, “What is ‘water’?”

Like the fish in this parable, we live and breathe and rarely, if ever, question that we are saturated in the ideology in which we are immersed. Thus, with this overview chapter we will intentionally explore one prevalent ideology, the “growth ideology”,¹ as it relates to sustainability in general and to the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), specifically. And, we offer a critique through the ecosocial lens using a “degrowth approach”,^{2,3} which we explain more fully below, to better understand the ways that social work can promote genuine sustainability and work alongside others involved *within and beyond* the SDGs.

Growth Ideology

The growth ideology promotes economic gain through development *as if* it is essential to human well-being, however, it has been proven that the opposite is true.⁴ The growth ideology emphasizes the continual increase in the production of goods and services, despite the costs to people and planet; this is the reason for unsustainable societies and the global climate crisis.^{5,6,1,3}

This ideology was solidified during the industrial revolution and since then has been adopted so completely throughout much of the world and coupled with neoliberalism and capitalism. Development within the growth ideology that prompted the industrial revolution, was and continues to be the primary source of the problems that we work so diligently to alleviate (e.g., economic, political prosperity for a few at the expense of others and the environment).⁴

Growth ideology is firmly situated in an anthropocentric worldview that places humans over or outside of the ecosystem in which they exist. Others, who operate out of an ecosocial worldview,^{7,8,9,10,11} have rejected this growth ideology, such as many indigenous scholars and communities and others who have taken up a degrowth approach.

Degrowth

The degrowth approach, or simply, [degrowth](#),¹² is a term for a vast array of concepts that offer alternatives to the growth ideology and its emphasis on development. Degrowth, has risen in popular discourse, though it had been also been gaining traction in less well-known circles for decades. Degrowth scholar, Giorgos Kallis, notes:

In economic terms, degrowth refers to a trajectory where the 'throughput' (energy, materials and waste flows) of an economy decreases while welfare, or well-being, improves. The hypothesis is that degrowing throughput will in all likelihood come with degrowing output, and that these can only be outcomes of a social transformation in an egalitarian direction. [...] But the definition is clear. [...] Degrowth is when social and environmental conditions improve, and GDP inevitably declines as a result. (p.9)³

Degrowth promotes transformative change in society at large that is not only a shift in economic models, rather a shift to embrace an ecosocial worldview that strengthens relationships to people and place and elevates the knowledge commons. While degrowth includes theses that point to the “limits of growth”, degrowth does not mean anti-growth, rather it is sometimes understood as “de-emphasizing” growth, or “de-centering” economic growth as the goal and measure of success.

Degrowth questions the ways that we do “business as usual”, including our measures of success and helps us to mindfully consider, “what do we aim to achieve, and why?” And, then, to mindfully reflect on how we should best go about achieving these goals. For example, is the goal about being ‘more efficient’ in one’s work, or should the

goal really be about ‘working less’? Perhaps we should strive not to get more done, but to have less to do.¹³

With a degrowth perspective towards our work, we may then slow down to enjoy the relationships with others in our lives, invest in the connections to place, and take advantage of the opportunities to raise our own garden, hang our clothes to dry, or walk/bike rather than always be in a rush. We rush to get food on the table, laundry off our to do list, and to hurry and get places because we have too much to do in one day. This hurried life pace in the growth ideology puts pressure on us to rely heavily on unsustainable practices such as using fossil fuels for our own transportation and that of our food sources (often traveling thousands of miles before it reaches our tables) and for energy for non-renewable appliances.

Thus, in our quest for promoting community and environmental sustainability, the degrowth approach, combined with radical redistribution of access to resources,^{5,6} is the best path that offers the possibility of a legitimately sustainable future with climate justice for all.

Sustainability and the Limits of Sustainable Development

Globally, there continues to be increasing recognition that we are in a global climate crisis and acknowledgement that we must address unsustainable societies and the related injustices through collective action for sustainability.^{5,1}

In this context, sustainability has become a buzz word in popular discourse around environmental sustainability. However, sustainability means the ability to be maintained and renewed within normal balance of lifecycles, not becoming depleted or extinct. Defining sustainability as merely about the natural environment is incomplete as it ignores the social systems that intertwine with the environment, impacting overall sustainability. These social systems are the elements that determine whether the broad ecological system, that includes humans as a part, is sustainable. The social systems include worldviews, culture, economics, politics, family and

community sub-systems, each contributing to overall sustainability. So, efforts to move toward sustainability necessitate consideration of how to create healthy and just political, economic, family, and community systems that support the natural environment. This is social sustainability.

The ability of the ecosystem to be maintained and renewed within normal balance of lifecycles has been and continues to be an essential element of cultures and societies which operate out of an ecosocial worldview. For example, one concept of “seventh generation thinking” compels us to make decisions about how we live now with full consideration of how it will impact life seven generations from now.

Sustainability does NOT mean, sustainable development. Sustainable development and sustainability have become wedded in popular discourse so much so that some people may think of the terms as interchangeable, which they are not. Sustainable development was originally put forth as a solution to the development model as a way to address the growing concerns of the limits to growth and the apparent injustices that were prevalent in the growth ideology’s development model. Among the many definitions for sustainable development, the most frequently quoted, is the definition by the Brundtland Commission: "Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It contains within it two key concepts: the concept of “needs”, in particular the essential needs of the world’s poor, to which priority should be given; and the idea of limitations imposed by the state of technology and social organization on the environment’s ability to meet present and future needs" (ch.2, para1).¹⁴ This concept of sustainable development introduces consideration for the future with two essential checks: the priority of the needs of the poor and the recognition of biophysical boundaries. The first has been ignored within the dominant neoliberal policy during the last decades. The second is already relativized in the definition itself as a matter of technological development. The Brundtland report goes no further than qualifying the kind of growth

that would be needed, instead of fundamentally rethinking “development”.⁶

Thus, despite the admirable idea to include sustainability (which originates in an ecosocial worldview) with development (which is based on an anthropocentric worldview) to create “sustainable development”, it merely created another model which ultimately is still situated in the anthropogenic, capitalist growth economic paradigm. This growth ideology keeps perpetuating the unsustainable and unjust byproducts of growth, which cannot lead to true sustainability as injustice is inherent in this model.⁴ Thus, sustainable development is a conundrum, as it is impossible to keep developing in the growth ideology and achieve genuine sustainability.

The degrowth approach questions the anthropocentric development paradigm and calls for a paradigm shift to an ecosocial worldview^{5,6,7} which leads to a truly sustainable path that does not keep perpetuating the unsustainable and unjust byproducts of growth, be they from mere development or “sustainable development”.

United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals

Sustainable development has been lifted up in global conversations and action through the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals. By taking into account sustainable development, the United Nations shifted from the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), to promote the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted in 2015 via the outcome of an effort to create a framework with a common language of how to achieve global well-being. The SDGs have been lauded for their ability to create a common language to address complicated global issues, acknowledge the necessity of global cooperation in order to achieve wellbeing, begin to set global standards and accountability, move toward integration and manageability of very complex issues that many people view as separate, offer concrete, measurable goals and targets, and bring the environment clearly into connection with human well-being.

While the process to develop the SDGs represents a great accomplishment of collaboration and compromise, they have also been criticized. For example, as they are interwoven, they are impossible to separate, yet people continue to work on them in silos. With attempts to achieve success in one, they create barriers and challenges for success in others.

Ultimately, the outcome of this framework, including its aims and measures of success, is still part of the growth ideology, and thus, can only take us so far in achieving some aspects of sustainability. For instance, the UN's aim for SDG 9 is to seek "investment in infrastructure and innovation as crucial drivers of economic growth and development". This confirms that the SDGs are still firmly situated in the growth economic mindset. And, their aim to improve technology as a key to sustainability and jobs, while admirable, is insufficient to address the climate crisis at the rate we must attain if we are to survive, not to mention the unsustainable byproducts of such technology. While the SDGs do move us beyond mere development to sustainable development, they still rely on the erroneous assumption that sustainability can be achieved through a development which is based on "sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth" (SDG 8).

While the SDGs have some strengths and benefits to humans, and to the planet, they fall short of the bigger, longer term purpose of realizing sustainability. In the following section, we will offer a more extensive critique of each SDG from a degrowth lens.

Social Work and Sustainability

[The Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development](#)¹⁵ incites us to promote sustainable communities and environments. Around the world social workers are coming alongside communities that are unfairly impacted by climate injustices to create solutions that are prioritized by the local communities. While this is urgent now, in the context of the global climate crisis, the social work profession has been involved with environmental issues (both built and natural)

since the dawn of the profession, seeking to improve sanitation, working environments, housing, and parks and recreation.¹⁶

Additionally, social work practice is clearly connected to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). As partners with and leaders in many communities where the work related to the SDGs occurs, we must consider our role in promoting community and environmental sustainability, *within and beyond* the SDGs. While we need to be well versed in the SDG language and concepts and involved in conversations and actions with global partners for the SDGs, we must maintain a critical eye on the limitations of this framework and help shift the conversation towards real solutions, i.e. which can be sustained in the long term. We maintain that this shift involves embracing an ecosocial worldview and taking a degrowth approach for transformational alternatives to sustainable development.

To this end, we have structured this volume of our workbook series to focus on the contribution of social work in relation to each of the SDGs. This is in no way meant to reinforce the siloed thinking of partializing complex issues; indeed, the intersections are infinite. With this overview chapter, we offer a brief degrowth critique of all the SDGs as a way to open the conversation for critical reflection and discussion. This is not an exhaustive critique, rather our critique is a way to enter into a conversation and encourage critical thinking about how social work relates to sustainability, and the SDGs, and how it can move beyond the growth ideology to embrace concepts of degrowth. While we encourage the reader to engage with this workbook in its entirety, the chapters may stand alone, thus we reiterate these brief critiques in each chapter prior to the authors' contributions. This is not a critique of the authors' perspectives, which may align more with working within the SDGs or moving beyond the SDGs with more explicit degrowth perspectives.

We hope that this will help us all become more mindful of our ideologies (specifically in this case in regard to the growth ideology), and not continue mindlessly "swimming" along, not knowing we are in "water". This volume of the workbook series is thus, an attempt to

demonstrate to the profession our relevance to the SDGs, as well as to demonstrate to the world that social work is essential to the realization of sustainability, *within and beyond* the SDGs.

Within: What Social Work Brings to SDGs

Working to eradicate the injustices that stem from poverty, inequality, and oppression is at the core mission of social work and encompasses each of the 17 SDGs. For example, poverty and inequality impacts overall well-being, health, and civic participation, and oppression, affecting both people and planet. When we operate *within* the current framework of the SDGs, social work promotes solutions that impact multiple SDGs at once, such as universal social protection systems, fair and ethical employment practices, democratic participation, and sustainable natural resource management.

The social work profession's unique perspectives and skill sets are sorely needed. These include our emphasis on social justice, empowerment, the strengths perspective, and the person in environment perspective (also known as people as place),¹⁷ along with the approach of using a systems framework. These social work perspectives help to make more evident the power dynamics that exist and highlight the ways they are changed as we work to alleviate injustices related to poverty, inequality, and oppression, often connected to environmental and ecological injustices. Working within the SDG framework which uses the "triple bottom line" of sustainable development (i.e., the advancement of people, profit, and planet) we can help bring ecological justice to the forefront.^{6,7} However, with an ecosocial lens we can also move beyond sustainable development to shift the conversation and create truly sustainable solutions.

Beyond: Shifting to Ecosocial Worldview and Degrowth

By embracing the ecosocial worldview we can shift the discussion and actions around the SDGs, taking a transformative approach that offers a critical understanding that the "triple bottom line" of sustainable development is not actually possible. Competition and scarcity undergird the growth ideology, where sustainable development is

located, and in that model profit will always prevail over the aspirations of meeting the supposed competing needs of people and planet. Ultimately this framework will only serve to further perpetuate ecological injustices and power imbalances.

Degrowth involves localizing solutions and is not only about a shift in economic ideology, but in a revised society that promotes cooperation, sharing the abundance, and reciprocity-based relationships among people and the planet.¹⁸ This revisioning necessitates identifying alternative measures of “success” which should not be wedded to mere economic gain. Within the growth ideology, our current indicators are flawed as they only measure limited aspects associated with economic growth and promote solutions which give preference to profit and primarily benefit those with power. Instead, we can adopt non-economically centered indicators of prosperity that are within the ecosocial worldview. These measures determine success within the context of the interdependent well-being of people and planet (e.g., time, relationships, health, etc.).^{6,7} By moving **beyond** sustainable development to degrowth as transformational alternatives, we can open up the opportunities for truly sustainable solutions.

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Chapter 1: SDG 1: No Poverty

Building Social and Environmental Sustainability through Social Entrepreneurship in Social Work Practice

By Suzan van der Pas and Ido de Vries

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Learning Outcomes:

1. Describe the connection of social work with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 1: No Poverty and Goal 10: Reduced Inequalities.
2. Understand the relevance of social entrepreneurship for social work practice.
3. Describe the connection between social entrepreneurship and social and environmental sustainability in social work.
4. Identify ways to integrate social entrepreneurship into social work practice supporting the realization of the SDG's, especially, SDG 1: No Poverty and SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities

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Editors' Degrowth Critique Summary of SDGs By Meredith Powers & Michaela Rinkel

Please see the Overview Chapter of this [Volume 3](#) of the edited workbook series, *Social Work Promoting Community and Environmental Sustainability*, for a more complete discussion of the ecosocial worldview and the editors' degrowth critique on the growth model, sustainable development and the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

This summary is offered not as a critique of the authors' chapter, but as a prompt to consider the chapter content in light of a call to engage in practice **within and beyond** the SDG framework.

Social work practice is clearly connected to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). As partners with and leaders in many communities where the work related to the SDGs occurs, we must consider our role in promoting community and environmental sustainability, **within and beyond** the SDGs. While we need to be versed in the SDG language and concepts and involved in conversations and actions with global partners for the SDGs, we must maintain a critical eye on the limitations of this framework and help shift the conversation towards genuine solutions (i.e. which can be sustained in the long term). We maintain that this shift involves embracing an ecosocial worldview and taking a degrowth approach for transformational alternatives to sustainable development.

Despite the admirable idea to include sustainability (which originates in an ecosocial worldview) with development (which is based on an anthropocentric worldview) to create “sustainable development”, it merely created another model which ultimately is still situated in the anthropogenic, capitalist growth economic paradigm. This growth ideology keeps perpetuating the unsustainable and unjust byproducts of growth, which cannot lead to true sustainability as injustice is inherent in this model.

This volume of the workbook series is thus, an attempt to demonstrate to the profession our relevance to the SDGs, as well as to demonstrate to the world that social work is essential to the realization of sustainability, ***within and beyond*** the SDGs.

Within: What social work brings to the SDGs

Working to eradicate the injustices that stem from poverty, inequality, and oppression is at the core mission of social work and encompasses each of the 17 SDGs. For example, poverty and inequality impacts overall well-being, health, and civic participation, and oppression, affecting both people and planet. When we operate ***within*** the current framework of the SDGs, social work promotes solutions that impact multiple SDGs at once, such as universal social protection systems, fair and ethical employment practices, democratic participation, and sustainable natural resource management.

The social work profession’s unique perspectives and skill sets are sorely needed. These include our emphasis on social justice, empowerment, the strengths perspective, and the person in environment perspective (also known as people as place), along with the approach of using a systems framework. These social work perspectives help to make more evident the power dynamics that exist and highlight the ways they are changed as we work to alleviate injustices related to poverty, inequality, and oppression, often connected to environmental and ecological injustices. Working within the SDG framework which uses the “triple bottom line” of sustainable development (i.e., the advancement of people, profit, and planet) we

can help bring ecological justice to the forefront. However, with an ecosocial lens we can also move beyond sustainable development to shift the conversation and create truly sustainable solutions.

Beyond: Shifting to ecosocial worldview and degrowth

By embracing the ecosocial worldview we can shift the discussion and actions around the SDGs, taking a transformative approach that offers a critical understanding that the “triple bottom line” of sustainable development is not actually possible. Competition and scarcity undergird the growth ideology, where sustainable development is located, and in that model profit will always prevail over the aspirations of meeting the supposed competing needs of people and planet. Ultimately this framework will only serve to further perpetuate ecological injustices and power imbalances.

Degrowth involves localizing solutions and is not only about a shift in economic ideology, but in a revisioned society that lives cooperation, sharing the abundance, and reciprocity-based relationships among people and the planet. This revisioning necessitates identifying alternative measures of “success” which should not be wedded to mere economic gain. Within the growth ideology, our current indicators are flawed as they only measure limited aspects associated with economic growth and promote solutions which give preference to profit and primarily benefit those with power. Instead, we can adopt non-economically centered indicators of prosperity that are within the ecosocial worldview. These measures determine success within the context of the interdependent well-being of people and planet (e.g., time, relationships, health, etc.). By moving ***beyond*** sustainable development to degrowth as transformational alternatives, we can open up the opportunities for truly sustainable solutions.

Lesson:

The intention of this chapter is to give a better understanding of the relevance of social entrepreneurship for social work practice, describe the principles of social entrepreneurship in social work education and identify ways in which entrepreneurial social workers might address two important UNDP Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): 1: No Poverty¹ and 10: Reduced Inequalities in social work practice.² Modern western society is confronted with ongoing budget cuts by governments, widening gaps between different groups and growing uncertainty. The neo-liberal capitalist model is exploiting the resources of the planet and its people. Although a counter movement is developing (e.g., by growing possibilities of renewable energy and circular economic thinking and research), social work has not always been recognized as an inspiring force helping this development. To create more socially and environmentally sustainable societies, social innovation and social entrepreneurship is required in social work practice.

The primary role of social work in promoting social development is critical in situations of persistent poverty since poverty has a crippling effect on the functioning and well-being of individuals in society. Social workers work with many different kinds of people, the majority of whom are poor. The SDG 1: No poverty and the SDG 10: Reduced inequalities are guiding principles not only for political and global action but also guiding principles for the quality and impact of social work. Extreme poverty has stabilized considerably since 1990, although pockets of the worst forms of poverty persist. Ending poverty requires [universal social protection systems](#)³ aimed at safeguarding all individuals throughout the life cycle. See also the intentions formulated by the UN in "[Third United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty \(2018–2027\)](#)".⁴ The rate of extreme poverty has fallen rapidly: in 2013 it was a third of the 1990 value. The latest global estimate suggests that 11 percent of the world population, or 783 million people, still live below the extreme poverty threshold. Poverty leads to impaired possibilities of participation in society and the stress that accompanies poverty leads to reduction of

personal and social well-being. The goal of social work is enhancing participation and social well-being, and therefore plays an important role for SDG 1.

SDG 10 focuses on fighting inequality. One of the targets of SDG 10 states: [“By 2030, empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status”](#).⁵ The task of the social worker is to promote action and programs that include the vulnerable and lead to reducing inequalities between different groups. This is not new and fits very well in the international definition of social work: “Social work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work”.⁶

Social workers can be a source of innovative practice by identifying and implementing new ways to address social problems such as poverty and inequality. We believe that by embracing a social entrepreneurial attitude, social workers will have a greater impact in dealing with the wicked problems that are untamed in our society. Wicked problems are social or cultural problems that are difficult or impossible to solve because of incomplete, contradictory, or changing requirements that are often difficult to recognize or the interconnected nature of these problems with other problems.^{7,8} Examples of social problems that are wicked are poverty, inequality, political instability, inequalities in health and well-being.

Social workers as social entrepreneurs are joining forces with community members, government, and business partners to start ventures that creatively meet social needs.⁹ Germak and Singh¹⁰ regard social entrepreneurship as a hybrid of macro social work practice and business skills and activities. Social worker educators could operate as social bricoleurs (addressing small-scale social issues) as we are training our students social work. It means that social workers need to actively seek opportunities in the

environment, being able to handle risks and uncertainty. We agree with Germak and Singh that given the tremendous need for creative solutions for today's complex social and environmental problems, it is time for social workers to stand up and embrace the straightforward business sense found in social entrepreneurship.¹⁰ The competencies we describe in this chapter are needed to develop a social entrepreneurial attitude. And, this attitude is a precondition for dealing with wicked social problems, to be able to create better opportunities for others and focus on the SDG's 1 and 10 on a local level. It means dealing with the uncertainty of entrepreneurial recognition of chances. But it also makes the value of social workers more sustainable and helps them to create their own social ventures and create even more social impact.

The social welfare system in the Netherlands, as in many other countries, is rapidly changing.^{11,12} This is mainly due to budget cuts by governments, the changing view that people need to be more self-reliant and less dependent on our welfare system, and the decentralization of welfare and care in the Netherlands (comparable with Denmark) from national and regional government to the local municipalities or cities. Instead of a *welfare state*, it is more appropriate to speak of a *participation society*: the policy of trying to involve all citizens and have them participating in their own welfare solutions.^{13,11,14} These changes are a massive reform which asks for new professional skills of social workers.

Social care cuts result in less money and less support for social work. And the ideas behind the participation society demand that people will have to do more themselves in solving their welfare needs and taking care of their personal and social well-being. That can be challenging for vulnerable people, and it could mean that instead of finding solutions to their troubles, their difficulties and stress levels simply increase. That is why the concept of inclusion and togetherness (in organizing solutions owned by the people themselves) is receiving more and more attention. Creating social solutions is creating social value and if you are in some way receiving money for creating that social value and diminishing social needs: you

are considered a social entrepreneur. Social entrepreneurs address social problems or needs that are unmet by (local) government or private markets, are driven by social value creation and use a market orientation dealing with these social problems.¹⁵ Social entrepreneurs face equivocal input: the wicked social problems they deal with, the delivery of the “right” services and the implications of market systems. Social entrepreneurs move in a field where different logics are voiced: market orientation, public and government.¹⁶

Competencies for the Social Entrepreneurial Attitude

We believe that to develop a social entrepreneurial attitude a number of competencies need to be developed and trained.

- Being able to listen well and become an advocate of the needs of people that are dealing with wicked problems while respecting their own authenticity, own self-respect and own strengths and resilience.
- Being able to create (new) solutions with others by applying concepts of co-creation.
- Understanding the local authorities/municipalities and its policies. How do they work and make decisions? Because of the decentralization of welfare policies, local authorities are responsible for creating new and fitting solutions that help people to participate and be part of the (local) society.
- Understanding the principles of change and being able to organize change and manage change to be sustainable. Being able to apply change management principles.
- Understanding the principles of social entrepreneurship: organizing social value and income. Develop your own business models and knowing how to “sell”: being able to show and share your personal and professional value in your actions.
- Try, practice and keep learning by doing.

We try to educate our social work students in these competencies, because acting as a social entrepreneur can create social innovation in dealing with untamed problems in society. We believe that a social

entrepreneurial attitude will lead to chances and changes not yet foreseen. It can lead to a more social and just society if social workers cross the bridge of prejudice against entrepreneurship and deal with the uncertainty of risk-taking: seeing opportunities and chances to create social value.

Examples of Social Entrepreneurial Education in Different Countries

To become a social entrepreneurial social worker, access to innovative education is important. In different countries, you can see the development of curricula in bachelor and master level programs that endeavor to bring the principles of social entrepreneurship into education. Nils-Petter Karlsson 2017 states: “a new mix of welfare providers, where social innovation and social entrepreneurship will be considerable actors, will change the way we do social work today. There is ample reason to include social entrepreneurship and social innovation into our curriculums today, and to present possibilities for our students to master these methods” (p. 9).¹⁷ In this section we consider what these principles of social entrepreneurship could be and how these can be taught. We begin by drawing from our own experiences with a 20-week minor in social entrepreneurship within the education of social workers in the Netherlands. From there we will describe another example from Norway and further what we consider the building blocks of the social entrepreneurial professional attitude and how this can be acquired and trained.

In the social entrepreneurship minor at the University of Applied Sciences Leiden we ask social work students to first investigate a social problem; that is a problem in the community that the municipality wants to change. For example, what do inhabitants in a certain neighborhood consider necessary to improve their neighborhood, or how can informal caregivers in the community be supported and what are their needs? These assignments can only be fulfilled when the students connect with the communities and with the specific groups involved. The assignments are performed in small groups of 5 to 7 students. In the second part of the minor, students are asked to individually create a (small) intervention that is meaningful for/with a group of (vulnerable) people which creates

social value for them. This intervention is their value proposition as a social entrepreneur and must be supported by the development of their business plan ([business canvas model](#)¹⁸ developed by [Alexander Osterwalder](#)).¹⁹ The students must also apply change management thinking (i.e. [Kotter's eight steps](#)²⁰ of how to organize sustainable change).²¹ See also: [Successful Change video](#).²²

1. *Create a sense of urgency*: Help others see the need for change through a bold, aspirational opportunity statement that communicates the importance of acting immediately.
2. *Build a guiding coalition*: A volunteer army (see number 4 below) needs a coalition of effective people – born of its own ranks – to guide it, coordinate it, and communicate its activities.
3. *Form a strategic vision and initiatives*: Clarify how the future will be different from the past and how you can make that future a reality through initiatives linked directly to the vision.
4. *Enlist a volunteer army*: Large-scale change can only occur when massive numbers of people rally around a common opportunity. They must be bought-in and build their sense of urgency to drive change while moving in the same direction. These are the people that feel connected with the goal of the intervention or organization, support it and are willing to participate in one way or another, because the urgency and goal are made clear by the guiding coalition.
5. *Enable action by removing barriers*: Removing barriers such as inefficient processes and hierarchies provides the freedom necessary to work across silos and generate real impact.
6. *Generate short-term wins*: Wins are the molecules of results. They must be recognized, collected and communicated – early and often – to track progress and energize volunteers to persist.

7. *Sustain acceleration*: Press harder after the first successes. Your increasing credibility can improve systems, structures and policies. Be relentless with initiating change after change until the vision is a reality.
8. *Institute change*: Articulate the connections between the new behaviors and organizational success, making sure they continue until they become strong enough to replace old habits.

The intervention developed by the students is carried out and presented to different professionals and the local residents involved. Some examples of these interventions are: (1) a training for professional cooks that work together with people with a mental disability; (2) an information system preventing debt of rent for housing agencies; (3) a training in well-being for preschool children; (4) and improving public places by sharing plants and seeds for flowers.

The combination of co-creation and creating social value is often seen as a form of social innovation. Social innovation and social entrepreneurship is about applying practical, innovative and sustainable approaches to benefit society in general. It is about outside-the-box thinking. Innovation uses creativity to find new solutions to solve different challenges in the welfare.^{23,24,25}

To have a social entrepreneurial attitude asks for virtuous behavior. The virtues that are needed to practice acting as a social entrepreneur are compassion, altruism, and other-orientation, together with having a focus on creating opportunities and developing chances. Compassion motivates the creation of sustainable social value and a reaction to the needs of others, also deepens the concept of empathy: both sufferers and actors engage in sensemaking by interpreting each other's situations and conditions.²⁶ Compassion and the will to improve the situation of others are virtues often found in the motives of social workers. Altruism focuses on the will to work for the welfare of society and the concern to make others happy and enhance personal and social welfare and is an important motivator

for social professionals.²⁷ By other-orientation we mean the opposite of the “homo-economicus” the highly individualistic vision of people being steered only by self-interest. One of the aspects that makes us human is our other-orientation: that we are beings in a social fabric because of noticing, seeing and interacting with each other. Other-orientation is valuing and feeling concerned for the well-being of others, including the many flora and fauna that make up the ecosystems we share.²⁸ Other-orientation is not only people oriented, but also planet-orientation: the experience of nature is a critical component of human physical, emotional, intellectual and even moral development.²⁹ Values are an integral part of decision making.³⁰ In our education of social workers we are supporting the development of these motives as a force for actions. In this way entrepreneurial social workers will create a more sustainable social and environmental impact.

Another example of social work education focusing on the development of social entrepreneurial attitude comes from Norway. The University College of Southeast Norway created the opportunity for social work students in their final year to create student businesses within their social work education as their final thesis. Examples of businesses developed include an anti-bullying program and an intervention to reduce high school dropout. These students had to develop and promote their interventions as their business. Both student groups had to find their own clients to deliver their services.

Application:

Instructions: Read the following case study and answer the corresponding questions.

Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) (sometimes referred to as community *shared* agriculture) endeavors to shorten food supply chains and reconnect farmers and consumers.³¹ CSA demonstrates an innovative approach dealing with challenges in the food system and addressing environmental sustainability. CSA has gained increasing popularity in the Netherlands, especially in urban regions.³² CSAs attempt to build social communities around the growing and eating

of food.³³ Following Balázs and colleagues, this implies building “reciprocity-based social relations where conventional economic roles (such as producer and consumer) turn to social ones (members of a community)” (p. 101).³⁴ CSAs can be either farmer- or consumer-initiated, and vary in the number of members and participation costs. CSAs typically have a wide variety of vegetables and additional produce, and participants often go and harvest themselves. The vegetables that are ready that week, are being harvested by either volunteers/professional farmer or the consumer-participants themselves. CSA customers pay the farmers upfront for a share of the harvest and receive produce weekly throughout the growing season. This allows stability for a farmer and a guaranteed market. CSA makes the economic risk of farming (less crops because of bad weather) a shared risk of farmer and consumer. The voluntary participation of the consumers is part of the business model that creates an alternative/expanded economy, by including the consumers in not only the monetary transaction for the goods (paying as consumer), but they are also enlisted in the process of production of food by their voluntary participation in maintaining the land and the crops (i.e. weeding), which also enhances well-being.

CSA “City Garden WTG in Haarlem”

The [City Garden WTG](#)³⁵ was initiated in 2012 near Haarlem, The Netherlands. A small number of local residents, the local municipality, and the local retirement home rented a piece of land and buildings in a densely populated urban area and recruited individuals to buy a share at the beginning of the season and thereby gain the right to harvest a certain amount of fresh vegetables and fruit each week. Over the years an active local community has been created with about 260 individuals buying a share each year: people meet up in the garden, spend leisure time in a green environment, they chat during harvesting, and have seasonal events inviting others from the neighborhood. Over the years the city garden WTG also started delivering vegetables to the local foodbank, offering work-based activities supervised by social workers for people with mental health problems, establishing a pick-up service by volunteers of older

residents from the retirement home, and developing a children's garden program with the local primary school.

Exercise 1: Organizing a CSA in Your Neighborhood

Discuss in small groups

1. What are some social work roles you might perform and why? Please reference one or more of the articles mentioned in the lesson and case study background.
2. What are social entrepreneurial skills that a social worker could employ in working with residents to assist in setting up a CSA?
3. How can social workers use a social entrepreneurial attitude to promote social and environmental sustainability?
4. How would you organize the CSA in your neighborhood?
 - What is the urgency and relevance of the CSA project?
 - Who would you ask to participate in your leading coalition to start with the CSA?
 - What would be the main focus of your plan for the CSA?
 - What would you communicate and to whom?
 - What do you think is necessary to empower action for the CSA?
 - What are the quick wins you could realize?
 - How would you consolidate the CSA in your neighborhood?

Exercise 2: Role of Social Work Education in Developing Social Workers who can Engage in Social and Environmental Sustainability with Social Entrepreneurship

Discuss in groups how you see the connection between social work and SDG 1 and SDG 10.

1. Make a list of the wicked problems you encounter in the place you live, or from your personal experiences.
2. Make a second list of wicked problems you believe your country is facing.

3. Discuss in class how you experience the education and training you are engaged in and the wicked problems that you are seeing in your local environment: is there a connection? And if so what kind of connection?
4. Which competencies do you, as a social worker, need to deal with these wicked problems in your country?

Exercise 3: Design the Most Desirable Education for New Social Workers that Encourages Them to Start and Sustain a Social or Environmental Venture

In groups create a 1-page infographic that summarizes the answers to the following questions:

1. What are the courses you will keep in the curriculum?
2. What are the courses you are missing now and want to include?
3. How would you like to prove or demonstrate that you have acquired the skills to work on SDG 1 and SDG 10?

Summary Notes:

This chapter has outlined the relevance of social entrepreneurship for social work practice, especially as a way to address SDG 1: no poverty and SDG 10: reduced inequalities. It highlights the competencies needed to develop a social entrepreneurial attitude within social work practice. Examples are also given of social entrepreneurial education in two different countries where elements of change management thinking are incorporated to help organize sustainable change.

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- Urban Farmer Curtis Stone. (2016, May 13). *Why you should or should not run a CSA?* [Video file]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JVNcys71QJE>

Inspiration for change in steps according to Kotter:

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Chapter 2: SDG 2: Zero Hunger

Summer Harvest: Lessons from the Garden

By Meredith Tetloff and Jill Wicknick

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Learning Outcomes:

1. Explore how the UN Sustainable Development Goal 2: “Zero Hunger” connects with social work.
2. Examine multidisciplinary topics, such as food security and nutrition, through a symbiotic relationship of theory and practice, classroom and garden.
3. Explain the connection between biological nutritional needs, poverty, and health outcomes.
4. Understand food sources from a social and biological perspective.
5. Connect caring for plants in a garden to caring for persons living in poverty through service in a community garden and at an emergency assistance agency.

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Editors' Degrowth Critique Summary of SDGs By Meredith Powers & Michaela Rinkel

Please see the Overview Chapter of this [Volume 3](#) of the edited workbook series, *Social Work Promoting Community and Environmental Sustainability*, for a more complete discussion of the ecosocial worldview and the editors' degrowth critique on the growth model, sustainable development and the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

This summary is offered not as a critique of the authors' chapter, but as a prompt to consider the chapter content in light of a call to engage in practice ***within and beyond*** the SDG framework.

Social work practice is clearly connected to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). As partners with and leaders in many communities where the work related to the SDGs occurs, we must consider our role in promoting community and environmental sustainability, ***within and beyond*** the SDGs. While we need to be well versed in the SDG language and concepts and involved in conversations and actions with global partners for the SDGs, we must maintain a critical eye on the limitations of this framework and help shift the conversation towards genuine solutions (i.e. which can be sustained in the long term). We maintain that this shift involves embracing an ecosocial worldview and taking a degrowth approach for transformational alternatives to sustainable development.

Despite the admirable idea to include sustainability (which originates in an ecosocial worldview) with development (which is based on an anthropocentric worldview) to create “sustainable development”, it merely created another model which ultimately is still situated in the anthropogenic, capitalist growth economic paradigm. This growth ideology keeps perpetuating the unsustainable and unjust byproducts of growth, which cannot lead to true sustainability as injustice is inherent in this model.

This volume of the workbook series is thus, an attempt to demonstrate to the profession our relevance to the SDGs, as well as to demonstrate to the world that social work is essential to the realization of sustainability, ***within and beyond*** the SDGs.

Within: What social work brings to the SDGs

Working to eradicate the injustices that stem from poverty, inequality, and oppression is at the core mission of social work and encompasses each of the 17 SDGs. For example, poverty and inequality impacts overall well-being, health, and civic participation, and oppression, affecting both people and planet. When we operate ***within*** the current framework of the SDGs, social work promotes solutions that impact multiple SDGs at once, such as universal social protection systems, fair and ethical employment practices, democratic participation, and sustainable natural resource management.

The social work profession’s unique perspectives and skill sets are sorely needed. These include our emphasis on social justice, empowerment, the strengths perspective, and the person in environment perspective (also known as people as place), along with the approach of using a systems framework. These social work perspectives help to make more evident the power dynamics that exist and highlight the ways they are changed as we work to alleviate injustices related to poverty, inequality, and oppression, often connected to environmental and ecological injustices. Working within the SDG framework which uses the “triple bottom line” of sustainable development (i.e., the advancement of people, profit, and planet) we

can help bring ecological justice to the forefront. However, with an ecosocial lens we can also move beyond sustainable development to shift the conversation and create truly sustainable solutions.

Beyond: Shifting to ecosocial worldview and degrowth

By embracing the ecosocial worldview we can shift the discussion and actions around the SDGs, taking a transformative approach that offers a critical understanding that the “triple bottom line” of sustainable development is not actually possible. Competition and scarcity undergird the growth ideology, where sustainable development is located, and in that model profit will always prevail over the aspirations of meeting the supposed competing needs of people and planet. Ultimately this framework will only serve to further perpetuate ecological injustices and power imbalances.

Degrowth involves localizing solutions and is not only about a shift in economic ideology, but in a revisioned society that lives cooperation, sharing the abundance, and reciprocity-based relationships among people and the planet. This revisioning necessitates identifying alternative measures of “success” which should not be wedded to mere economic gain. Within the growth ideology, our current indicators are flawed as they only measure limited aspects associated with economic growth and promote solutions which give preference to profit and primarily benefit those with power. Instead, we can adopt non-economically centered indicators of prosperity that are within the ecosocial worldview. These measures determine success within the context of the interdependent well-being of people and planet (e.g., time, relationships, health, etc.). By moving *beyond* sustainable development to degrowth as transformational alternatives, we can open up the opportunities for truly sustainable solutions.

Lesson:

This lesson explores how the UN Sustainable Development Goal 2: Zero Hunger connects with social work. Broadly speaking, Zero

Hunger aims to not only end hunger across the planet, but also improve nutrition through sustainable agricultural practices. The goal demands improved outcomes for vulnerable populations, including young children, pregnant women, and older adults, and explicitly calls for increasing incomes of small-scale food producers and ensuring sustainable agriculture practices that are resilient to climate change and natural disasters.¹ As a profession grounded in the value of social justice², social workers are called upon to ensure equitable access to the benefits of food systems, such as nutrition and fair wages, and protections from risks associated with food systems, including pollution, exploitative labor practices, and over consumption of unhealthy foods. When discrimination and denial of rights do take place, social workers have a professional obligation to change the environment within which practice occurs. In our community in the southeast United States, children, people of color, and single-mother households are most vulnerable to insufficient nutrition and its related outcomes (chronic illness, developmental delays in children, low educational attainment, etc.).^{3,4} Poverty is the most significant indicator of food insecurity (lack of reliable access to nutritious food)³, and with a poverty rate of 23%,⁵ our community is in need of affordable and accessible sources of nutritious food. Our university, in partnership with the city, grows and sustains an organic community garden which provides fresh food donations to the local food pantry and offers small plots for a nominal fee or volunteer service. This interdisciplinary course provides an example of the role of social workers in contributing to Zero Hunger by utilizing the garden as a local resource to mitigate food insecurity, improve health outcomes related to nutrition, and educate community members about sustainable agriculture. Social workers and social work students assist with garden maintenance, distribute fresh produce to community members in need, and leverage these experiences into advocacy for structural change within food systems.

This lesson describes an interdisciplinary course taught over four weeks, in the summer, that integrates environmental and social justice issues, in a [service-learning](#)⁶ context. The overarching goal of

this course is for students to learn about combining environmental and social issues in a way that is positive both for the environment and for people in need. Links are made between caring for plants and soil in a garden to caring for our own health to caring for others. Using a praxis model, the course is designed to teach students the biology of plants and nutrition and how to care for plants with hands-on time in a garden. Students then donate the produce to and volunteer at an emergency food agency in the rural southeastern United States. This action is connected to reflections on systems of food from production to consumption and critical examination of food insecurity. Materials, assignments, and volunteer work emphasize the interdependence between natural and social environments, thus broadening students' understanding of multiple disciplines and placing food access as a central justice issue. Service time in an organic community garden introduces students to a hands-on approach toward improving how we produce and consume food. The course consists of labs in the University of Montevallo (UM)(Alabama, USA) Organic Community Garden under the guidance of a Certified Master Gardener, lectures from course professors and guest speakers, online content, volunteering at a local food agency, and donation of fresh produce. Topics and projects can be modified to fit into an existing course.

Community Gardens as Pedagogical Tools

The creation and use of community gardens in the United States mirror the ebb and flow of economic prosperity. According to Ferris, Norman, and Sempik, "What distinguishes a community garden from a private garden is the fact that it is in some sense a public garden in terms of ownership, access, and degree of democratic control" (p. 560).⁷ In the United States, community gardens began as an effort to improve the well-being of low-income, immigrant neighborhoods in the 1890s, and have frequently been used in urban and rural communities to supplement the food supply during war time and recessions.⁸ In the current context, gardens potentially improve access to affordable, healthy, fresh food for people experiencing [food insecurity](#)⁹ (lacking reliable, consistent access to nutritious food obtained through a socially acceptable manner). According to the

United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), approximately 12.3 percent of American households were food insecure in 2016.¹⁰ One consequence of food insecurity, especially in [food deserts](#)¹¹ (lack of healthy food retailers) and [food swamps](#)¹² (an abundance of unhealthy food retailers, such as fast food), is the over-consumption of inexpensive, processed foods, resulting in adverse effects such as obesity and diabetes.^{13,14} Activists in the food justice movement demand equitable access to affordable and nutritious food a basic human right, as illustrated by the specific targets of U.N. Sustainable Development Goal 2: Zero Hunger¹. Gardens are not only a source of healthy food; they are also convening spaces for community members to reclaim land use, create social connections, and pass gardening skills and food traditions from generation to generation. Research suggests community gardens provide several benefits to all involved, including improved food security; reduction in disease risk; cultural preservation; and increased motivation to create and sustain green spaces.⁸

Food Justice

The emerging food justice movement seeks to ensure nutritious food for everyone, regardless of economic level, and seeks to eliminate the lack of access to healthy food in communities. As one of the core social work values, social justice should be central to education and interventions directed at improving food security. The International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) includes social justice as a primary ethical principle, as does The National Association of Social Workers (NASW), who defines social justice as “the view that everyone deserves equal economic, political and social rights and opportunities.”¹⁵ Within food systems, this mandate applies to all stages, including food production, distribution, and consumption.¹⁶ One practical and effective strategy shown to improve food justice is community gardening.¹⁷ Social justice education implements pedagogical strategies that empower students with analytic tools to understand and challenge oppression, move from analysis to action, and develop a sense of agency and commitment to bring about a more just society.¹⁸ Several studies within the body of social justice

education research suggest that pedagogical methods are more important than content to achieve outcomes.^{19,20} It is within this framework that the authors developed the Summer Harvest course, taught by a biologist and social worker, that analyzes the relationship between poverty and nutrition; current farming systems, food policy, and food access; and promising interventions that more evenly distribute the benefits and burdens of food systems.

Interdisciplinary Component

This course has its foundation in social justice issues of food access and food quality; they are essential to framing the course. Although the class described herein integrates biology and gardening with environmental and social justice, a wide variety of disciplines can be paired with social work and a community garden to create a meaningful food justice-based interdisciplinary experience for students. Literature or art related to poverty, food, and gardens would offer a different perspective on food and social justice issues while helping to broaden the students' experience about how food and poverty are portrayed and perceived. Ethics or religion would provide companion content that would pair social issues with deep introspection about personal and social morals and priorities. Psychology, sociology, or political science would provide human behavior context about both people living in poverty and people who deny that there are poverty issues that need public support, through the various lenses of these fields. History would provide long-term perspective, either focused on the United States or globally, on food issues throughout time to allow consideration of the persistence of food-related poverty issues. Any of these discipline combinations could be complemented by journaling throughout the course to allow the students to work toward the progressive development of their thoughts and integration of the interdisciplinary content. One of the largest benefits from this course is the personal growth that the course variety supports: the integrated lecture content combined with hands-on gardening, volunteering, and poverty-related projects provide each student with time to process course material while the

diversity of activities allows each student to connect in their own way to the overarching issues being presented.

Syllabus Overview

Class	Topics, Projects, Activities	Garden Topics
1	<p>Lecture/Lab: Our Primary Food Sources, from a Biological Perspective</p> <p>Emergency Assistance Agency (SEA) Visit, Hosted by Executive Director</p> <p>Tour of SEA Food Pantry (students will volunteer once during the term)</p> <p>“Shelby Emergency Assistance: Services for Families in Crisis” presentation</p>	<p>Organic Gardening</p> <p>Purpose of our Garden</p>
2	<p>Lecture: Defining and Understanding Hunger and Food Insecurity</p> <p>Lecture/Lab: Plant Identification; Pests and Diseases of Food Identification</p>	Hands on Plant and Pest Identification
3	<p>Lecture: Policies and Programs for Hunger and Food</p> <p>Lecture: Food and Health: Local, Organic, and Other Issues</p>	Garden Tools and their Uses
4	<p>Project: Feeding a Family 1: Food Assistance Applications</p>	
5	<p>Lecture: Balanced Meal Plates</p> <p>Project: Feeding a Family 2a: Basic Nutrition and Calories</p>	
6	<p>Project: Feeding a Family 2b: Living on Food Pantry Groceries</p>	
7	<p>Lecture: Food Justice and Other Social Movements</p> <p>Lecture: Environment and Disease, Diseases of Poverty</p>	Solar Water Pump

8	Project: Assessing Communities for Food Security Lecture: Basic Plant Biology, with a Focus on Pollination and Pollinators	
9	Lecture: Plant Nutrients and Ecosystem Cycling; Soil and Soil Erosion	Composting
10	Film: A Place at the Table ²¹	

* Each class period is four hours long. All class days include discussion. Two exams are given.

** All class days include hands-on work in the garden. On some days, garden time includes a mini-lecture.

Class Session Topics and Resources

Our primary food sources, from a biological perspective: This is a combination of lecture and lab that provides a biological perspective on the food we eat. Major taxonomic categories are addressed along with the biological differences between fruits and vegetables and which food types correspond with which part of a plant (e.g., which foods are leaves, which are flowers, etc.). Once the material has been introduced in lecture, students examine packaged and fresh food by taxonomic category (e.g., a natural juice bottle or yogurt container with a bacterial species as an ingredient).

Defining and understanding hunger and food insecurity: Students are introduced to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)'s official definitions of hunger and food security²², possible causes of food insecurity, and personal stories of food insecurity. The lecture component starts with the claim that the world's food systems produce enough for all people to eat, yet hunger and food insecurity persist.²³ Students are asked to reflect on possible causes of food insecurity despite sufficient production. Readings and classroom lectures support the discussion by emphasizing natural and man-made barriers that restrict access and decrease affordability.^{24,25} After examining possible causes of food insecurity, students break out into small groups to brainstorm how they would define and measure food

insecurity (i.e., what information would they want to gather from individuals, families, and communities). After sharing their suggestions, the class reviews the current method of defining and measuring food insecurity in the United States²⁶ and identify strengths of this process and ways to improve it. The class then reviews data from the USDA^{28,29} to better understand food insecurity rates in relation to geography, age, race, socioeconomic status, and household composition. Finally, personal stories of families are shared via video to prompt discussions of the qualitative data and context missing from the big picture statistics. Students follow-up this class period with a visit to a local emergency food pantry. The first activity of the visit is to plan, prepare, cook, and eat meals based on a selection of groceries from the food pantry. This activity serves multiple purposes, including relationship building among students, a first-hand experience of eating with a limited selection, and the stress of planning meals and cooking in the most efficient manner possible. This experience also better prepares students to be more realistic for future exercises that require meal-planning (detailed below). After cooking and eating lunch together, students spend time with an agency social worker who reviews the services of the organization, shares experiences of clients and problem-solving by staff, and answers questions about the challenges facing our community.

Plant identification, pests and diseases of food plants: In this lecture/lab combination, vegetable plant identification techniques are demonstrated, with a focus on the plants growing in our garden. Students learn to identify plants by their leaves as well as to identify the flowers and fruits that will be produced as the summer season progresses. Shape, texture, and smell are utilized in plant identification. Common pests and diseases that are found in our garden are introduced along with their taxonomic classification, and identification characteristics are provided. Organic control mechanisms are discussed; students will have the opportunity to use these control techniques throughout the term when the pests are encountered. After the lecture portion of the lesson, specimens are examined in the lab and a trip to the garden provides time to search

for the pests presented in class. In preparation for this lecture/lab, samples materials are collected from the garden by the instructor shortly before class. This information is most beneficial when presented early in the semester so students can reinforce their knowledge each time they go to the garden.

Poverty & policies and programs for hunger and food: This session begins with an overview of various theories of poverty (students complete this reading before class)³¹ and examples of each theory. We then do a brief lecture on how the US defines poverty, including historical milestones. The lecture then focuses in on the US's policies and programs related to food security, including historical developments, various iterations of the [United States farm bill](#),³⁰ [Supplement Nutrition Assistance Program \(SNAP\)](#),³¹ [Supplement Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children \(WIC\)](#),³² [National School Lunch Program](#),³³ and the [Emergency Food Assistance Program](#).^{34,35} Students investigate the influence of government subsidies on the cost of food, the relationship between poverty and nutrition,^{36,37} and the impact of food assistance on human well-being.³⁸ Students are introduced to the Feeding a Family: Food Assistance (FAFI) exercise by looking up the typical demographics of those who receive SNAP,³⁹ how much benefits are, and the application process. The details of the project, both in-class and out of class components, are provided below.

Food and health: Local, organic, and other issues: The definitions of local food and organic food are discovered via class participation. The components of these definitions and their health impacts are explained to the class (e.g., pesticide use, food irradiation, GMO ingredients). Class discussion about links between local and/or organic food and health allows the students to consider the implications of direct consumption of food as well as the effect of long-distance transport of food on nutrient loss and air pollutants. Students are encouraged to consider the connections between food quality and social justice and the connections between food distribution and environmental justice.

Balanced meal plates: The class compares and contrasts the USDA My Plate diagram and an alternative model, the Harvard Healthy Eating Plate through open discussion. Satter’s Hierarchy of Food Needs⁴⁰ is examined. This work functions as preparation for the two “Feeding a Family” projects the students complete (to be discussed below in Exercises 1 and 2).

Food justice and other social movements: This session broadens beyond government policies and programs to examine the causes of inequalities in food production and access, and efforts to achieve food justice throughout the food cycle.⁴¹ Students research who grows and harvests food with an emphasis on farm workers;⁴² how food moves from farms and production facilities to points of purchase; and use USDA tools to assess food security in terms of availability (types and number of places to purchase food and what foods are available), accessibility (transportation and location of places to purchase food), and affordability (average prices of foods and poverty rates).⁴³ The class looks at examples of efforts to ameliorate inequalities.⁴⁴

Environment and disease, with a focus on diseases of poverty: In this lecture, poverty-related diseases in developed and developing nations are compared. Discussed are diseases that are the result of the internal environment (poor diet, lack of exercise, habits such as smoking) and diseases that arise from exposure to the external environment (viruses, bacteria, and parasites as well as pollutants). Students consider the amount of control an individual living in poverty has over their internal and external environments and the role government plays in the management of these factors (such as lack of regulation on requiring nutritional information of food, or warnings on cigarettes). We follow with a focus on the leading causes of death in the U.S. and the way in which each is influenced by diet, exercise, and poverty-related factors such as the location of major pollution-producers (e.g., industry, airports).

Basic plant biology, with a focus on pollination and pollinators: The goal of this lecture is to illustrate how plant pollination occurs and the

critically important role pollinators play in the garden and in the environment. The pollination process is explained using diagrams and our primary global food crops are discussed. The value of protecting the environment and pollinators, thereby protecting our own food sources, is emphasized. The \$29 billion ecosystem services value of pollination in the United States is presented.⁴⁵ After this class, students will be able to identify various pollinators as they work in the garden.

Plant nutrients and ecosystem cycling, soil and soil erosion: The essential plant macro- and micronutrients and the process of nutrient uptake by plants are presented in this lecture. Study of the primary components of fertilizer (nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium) allows students to understand the movement of these nutrients through the soil; students are also taught to understand that the numbers on a bag of fertilizer represent specific nutrient content. Soil health, soil erosion, and the impact of growing in monoculture are discussed. The important role of decomposers is tied into nutrient release, as well as to composting at the garden.

Garden lectures: Four mini-lectures are presented at the garden. On the first day, students are introduced to the definition of [organic gardening](#)⁴⁶ and to the purpose of a [community garden](#).⁴⁷ In other mini-lectures, students learn about gardening tools and their functions, the operation of our solar energy-powered water pump,⁴⁸ and composting.^{49,50} The composting lecture is delivered after the Nutrient Cycling and Soil lecture so connections from the classroom to the garden can be made.

Application:

Instructions: Since the original class was developed for delivery in the United States, the activities focus on programs/policies in the US. Please modify for fit with the programs and policies where the reader is located.

Exercise 1: Feeding a family on Food Assistance (FAF I)

The purpose of this assignment is to help students understand the life of someone in need of food assistance. For this assignment, you will play the role of the head of a multigenerational household that includes yourself, your 65-year-old mother, and your 4-year-old twin children.

In class:

1. What are SNAP's eligibility rules?⁵¹
2. Demographics of populations that actually receives SNAP (provide percentages for race, age, employment status, socioeconomic status, family composition)? Please provide the source of your information.
3. What are the benefits of the SNAP program? What are the shortcomings? Name one thing you would do to improve food assistance in the US.

Complete the following steps on your own outside of class:

1. You will complete a mock application for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) based on your family of four (you, your four-year old twin children, and 65-year old mother). Use the SNAP Pre-Screening Eligibility Tool: <https://www.snap-step1.usda.gov/fns/>.⁵²
Your family has the following resources and expenses:
Assets: None
Earned Income: 25 hours a week at \$7.25/hour
Unearned Income: Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF): \$190 and 65 year-old Supplemental Security Income (SSI): \$698 per month
Housing Costs: \$400
Medical Costs: \$200 Medication for 65-year old monthly
Child Care Costs: \$300 for each child weekly
2. Take the monthly dollar amount of SNAP (food stamps) funds you would receive and divide by 4 to get a weekly average. Develop a meal plan. You will need to visit an actual grocery store and record the costs of food items needed to feed

your family of four for one week. Review the [guidelines for what SNAP](#) can and cannot be used to purchase.⁵³ We will assume you have salt, pepper, and cooking oil at home; no need to purchase those. For more information about [SNAP benefits](#).⁵⁴ Also, the [Alabama Cooperative Extension System](#) has information on shopping and food preparation.⁵⁵

3. Write a paper that addresses the following:
 - a. How much money did your family get in benefits weekly and monthly?
 - b. List the meal plan, including three meals per day for four people for seven days along with the dollar amount. Be mindful about actual serving sizes people typically eat (e.g., a family of four would not split one can of soup).
 - c. Did you have enough money to adequately feed everyone in the family? Why or why not? Was there anything you would have liked to purchase but did not? Why? What decisions did you have to make about what to buy/not buy and why did you select the choice you did?
 - d. Then, search for additional sources of food for your multigenerational family. Identify the additional sources and describe how each source would help with food. Be as specific as possible.
4. In addition to the specific questions for this assignment, you will write a brief self-reflection about what you learned from completing the assignment. Consider the following questions:
 - a. Have you had any experiences, beyond this class, with limited food access and/or receiving food assistance? Reflect on this experience and what you could share with others to teach them about your experience.
 - b. What was the most interesting and challenging thing you learned about living on Food Stamps? (If you include your experience of struggle with “meal planning due to inexperience with cooking”, be sure to

also think beyond just this so you can address other components of the project, such as having to stay in a budget, making difficult decisions of what to exclude, transportation to the store, the amount of time it took for you to be careful as a shopper to select the right things and stay in budget, shopping with two small children in tow, etc.)

- c. How did this assignment help you to understand what it is like for an individual/family in need of food assistance?
- d. How could you use information from this assignment in your future life? Be specific and provide an example.

Exercise 2: Feeding a Family: Basic Nutrition/Calories and Living on Shelby Emergency Assistance (SEA) Groceries (FAF II)

In this exercise, students plan daily menus for a family of four persons using only the food items provided in bags of groceries our partner, Shelby Emergency Assistance, provides to a 3–4 person family. On Day 1, students unpack the groceries and work in pairs to plan meals based on their personal experience with meal sizes. Students then answer a series of questions related to their initial impressions of the food offered by SEA. On Day 2, students determine each family member's calorie requirements based on age, sex, activity level and other factors. They are given a list of groceries available in the bags, with number of servings and calories per serving, and are tasked to create a meal plan that stretches the food as long as possible while ensuring that each family member receives their minimum required daily calories and eats typical American meals for as long as possible. Students answer a series of questions related to the food available in the bags.

Exercise 3: Community Food Security Assessment

The purpose of this assignment is to help students learn and practice information literacy skills, specifically in terms of food security. This will help you in thinking about the social and political issues that influence food security. For this assignment, you will utilize an online

tool, the USDA's Food Environment Atlas⁵⁶, to investigate the current state of food security in your various communities (we use three counties in Alabama – the poorest, the wealthiest, and the most populated). Once you have gathered the basic data, you will critically assess the information to answer the questions listed below.

Here are the steps for the process:

1. Access to food is largely influenced by three major factors: Number and type of stores within a close proximity; Income; and Transportation. Recommended data websites for locating these data indicators include:
 - a. [Feeding America's Map the Meal](#)⁵⁷
 - b. [County Health Rankings](#)⁵⁸
 - c. [USDA's Food Environment Atlas](#)⁵⁹
2. Create a chart including the following indicators: Total population, Age, Race, Child food insecurity, Household food insecurity, Child poverty rate, Overall poverty rate, Median income, SNAP Participants as percent of population, Adult Obesity rate, Adult diabetes rate, Percentage of households with no car and low access, Percentage of population with low access to stores, Low income and low access, Number of farmer's markets, Number of grocery stores, Number of convenience stores, Number of specialized food stores, SNAP authorized stores, Number of supercenters, Number of fast food restaurants, Number of full-service restaurants, School lunch program participants, Summer food participants, SNAP redemptions, WIC redemptions, Average meal cost, 3-5 resources for assistance (examples include gardens, food pantries, the United Way, an agency serving older adults, Meals on Wheels, after school programs with food, etc.).
3. Now it's time to try to make sense of the data. Use the numbers to tell the story of the three counties, specifically reflecting on the following questions. Your essay should be 2 – 3 pages, double-spaced.

- a. Describe the current state of the three counties' food environment and in terms of availability, accessibility, and affordability.
- b. What do you think are barriers to healthy, high quality food? What are possible explanations for these barriers?
- c. What relationships seem to exist between poverty, access to food, type of access, and health?
- d. What are the strengths of each county? Does one county seem to have a better food environment than the others?
- e. What is one program or policy you would advocate to improve the current situation? Think about interventions that would address immediate need (usually charity) or long-term change (structural changes for social justice). Explain.

Resources:

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Chapter 3: SDG 3: Health and Well-being

Models of Environmental and Community Sustainability for better Mental Health and Well-being: An Indian Perspective

By Janardhana N, Aarti Jagannathan, Ameer Hamza

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Learning Outcomes:

1. Understand the importance of mental health in the context of UN Sustainable Development Goal 3: Good Health and Well-being.
2. Explore the synergic relationship between human beings and environment for better mental health and well-being.
3. Assess how activities related to environmental sustainability in the community can help in the process of recovery from mental health problems.
4. Understand the role of a social worker in promoting sustainability of people and planet within the mental health context.

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Editors' Degrowth Critique Summary of SDGs By Meredith Powers & Michaela Rinkel

Please see the Overview Chapter of this [Volume 3](#) of the edited workbook series, *Social Work Promoting Community and Environmental Sustainability*, for a more complete discussion of the ecosocial worldview and the editors' degrowth critique on the growth model, sustainable development and the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

This summary is offered not as a critique of the authors' chapter, but as a prompt to consider the chapter content in light of a call to engage in practice **within and beyond** the SDG framework.

Social work practice is clearly connected to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). As partners with and leaders in many

communities where the work related to the SDGs occurs, we must consider our role in promoting community and environmental sustainability, ***within and beyond*** the SDGs. While we need to be well versed in the SDG language and concepts and involved in conversations and actions with global partners for the SDGs, we must maintain a critical eye on the limitations of this framework and help shift the conversation towards genuine solutions (i.e. which can be sustained in the long term). We maintain that this shift involves embracing an ecosocial worldview and taking a degrowth approach for transformational alternatives to sustainable development.

Despite the admirable idea to include sustainability (which originates in an ecosocial worldview) with development (which is based on an anthropocentric worldview) to create “sustainable development”, it merely created another model which ultimately is still situated in the anthropogenic, capitalist growth economic paradigm. This growth ideology keeps perpetuating the unsustainable and unjust byproducts of growth, which cannot lead to true sustainability as injustice is inherent in this model.

This volume of the workbook series is thus, an attempt to demonstrate to the profession our relevance to the SDGs, as well as to demonstrate to the world that social work is essential to the realization of sustainability, ***within and beyond*** the SDGs.

Within: What social work brings to the SDGs

Working to eradicate the injustices that stem from poverty, inequality, and oppression is at the core mission of social work and encompasses each of the 17 SDGs. For example, poverty and inequality impacts overall well-being, health, and civic participation, and oppression, affecting both people and planet. When we operate ***within*** the current framework of the SDGs, social work promotes solutions that impact multiple SDGs at once, such as universal social protection systems, fair and ethical employment practices, democratic participation, and sustainable natural resource management.

The social work profession's unique perspectives and skill sets are sorely needed. These include our emphasis on social justice, empowerment, the strengths perspective, and the person in environment perspective (also known as people as place), along with the approach of using a systems framework. These social work perspectives help to make more evident the power dynamics that exist and highlight the ways they are changed as we work to alleviate injustices related to poverty, inequality, and oppression, often connected to environmental and ecological injustices. Working within the SDG framework which uses the "triple bottom line" of sustainable development (i.e., the advancement of people, profit, and planet) we can help bring ecological justice to the forefront. However, with an ecosocial lens we can also move beyond sustainable development to shift the conversation and create truly sustainable solutions.

Beyond: Shifting to ecosocial worldview and degrowth

By embracing the ecosocial worldview we can shift the discussion and actions around the SDGs, taking a transformative approach that offers a critical understanding that the "triple bottom line" of sustainable development is not actually possible. Competition and scarcity undergird the growth ideology, where sustainable development is located, and in that model profit will always prevail over the aspirations of meeting the supposed competing needs of people and planet. Ultimately this framework will only serve to further perpetuate ecological injustices and power imbalances.

Degrowth involves localizing solutions and is not only about a shift in economic ideology, but in a revised society that lives cooperation, sharing the abundance, and reciprocity-based relationships among people and the planet. This revisioning necessitates identifying alternative measures of "success" which should not be wedded to mere economic gain. Within the growth ideology, our current indicators are flawed as they only measure limited aspects associated with economic growth and promote solutions which give preference to profit and primarily benefit those with power. Instead, we can adopt non-economically centered indicators of prosperity that are within the ecosocial worldview. These measures determine success

within the context of the interdependent well-being of people and planet (e.g., time, relationships, health, etc.). By moving *beyond* sustainable development to degrowth as transformational alternatives, we can open up the opportunities for truly sustainable solutions.

Lesson:

The United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3 of Health and Well-Being focuses on ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being at all ages (UN, 2015).¹ The goal recognizes the promotion of mental health and well-being and the prevention and treatment of substance abuse as health priorities within the global development agenda. For example, Target 3.4 requests that countries: “by 2030, reduce by one third premature mortality from non-communicable diseases through prevention and treatment and promote mental health and well-being”, and Target 3.5 requests that countries: “strengthen the prevention and treatment of substance abuse, including narcotic drug abuse and harmful use of alcohol” (UN, 2015).¹ Mental health has thus come a long way from its exclusion from the Millennium Development Goals to its inclusion in the 2015 Sustainable Development Agenda, as a global development priority.²

The World Health Organization (WHO) offers the definition of health as ‘a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity’.³ More elegantly and pragmatically, mental health may be considered a person’s ability to think, to learn, and to live with his or her own emotions and the actions of others.⁴

In itself, mental health is a prerequisite for physical health, and is strongly interlinked with other development factors such as poverty, work and economic growth or peace and justice.² Mental health plays a key role in efforts to establish and achieve social inclusion and equity, universal health coverage, access to justice and human rights, and sustainable economic development.³ For example, poverty (goal 1) and mental illness are strongly linked, just as economic growth (goal 8) and safe and resilient cities and settlements (goal 11) depend

on an overall mentally healthy society. As a cross-cutting issue mental health has relevance across the whole range of sustainable development.⁵

The environment of a human being often can have an impact on their mental health and well-being. Scientific studies have well established that exposure to nature is positively associated with numerous aspects of both physiological and psychological health including positive impacts on anxiety, ADHD, aggression, depression, PTSD, and stress.^{6,7,8,9} One explanation for this connection between nature and mental health and well-being is the biophilia hypothesis.^{10,11} The biophilia hypothesis implicitly relates the point that humans possess an innate tendency to seek connections with nature and other forms of life.¹² This synergic relationship between a human being and their natural environment is an important aspect of environmental sustainability and needs to be understood in order to provide any psychosocial interventions to improve mental health and well-being. One mechanism for this synergistic effect is the restorative aspect of nature whereby natural places allow for renewal of personal adaptive resources in order to mitigate against the symptoms of stress.¹³ In addition to the effect that contact with the natural world has on increasing positive emotional states and decreasing negative emotions, such contact improves social connections, as well. For example, participation in community gardens improves community cohesion, decreases prejudice and neighborhood violence.⁸

One of the reciprocal approaches of maintaining community and environmental sustainability is when the community protects its natural environment and resources and this, then, acts as a source and means of well-being for them for mental health, and for economic health, as it can provide income or livelihood for them. This is especially possible in agrarian communities like India where agriculture and allied sectors like forestry and fisheries account for approximately 16% of the GDP (gross domestic product), and about 50% of the workforce.¹⁴ This approach is especially beneficial for persons with mental illness, where preserving and/or utilizing natural

resources for promoting livelihood opportunities can aid not only the personal recovery, but also provide a steady source of income. Experts suggest that social workers should engage in developing environmentally sustainable atmospheres where available livelihoods can act as personal recovery model for persons with mental illness.¹⁵

As is now recognized with its inclusion in the SDG's, mental health is a sustainable developmental issue. A health model of prevention, promotion and cure alone may not be the best approach for dealing with mental health problems. The sustainable developmental approach of dealing with bio-psycho-social and economic issues of the community through people's participation in inclusive approaches would help build a sustainable community model for better mental health, well-being and recovery.

In this chapter, we detail a few case examples from the Indian community which focus on this reciprocal relationship of promoting environmentally sustainable livelihood activities like horticulture, organic farming, and utilizing natural resources as a source of income in the process of personal recovery with mental illness and/or physical disabilities. In this model, it can be observed that persons with mental illness work directly or indirectly in the process of promoting and/or preserving environmental resources accessible in their own communities and benefit from participating in their own personal recovery and rehabilitation. This reciprocal relationship between all people, including those with mental illness, and their environment thereby contributes to establishing a sustainable community development model. These cases provide examples of how environmentally sustainable activities, such as preservation and innovation, can help in personal recovery for people who may live with physical and/or mental health problems. Such sustainable development activities not only serve to protect and preserve the environment, but also provide meaningful work, reconnection with community and family, and economic livelihood opportunities.

- a) *Case 1: (Horticulture and Organic Farming)* Mr. B, a 54 year old from rural Karnataka state of India was earning for the family, until he met with an accident that severely damaged

his spinal cord. The accident crippled him and he started suffering from depression and issues related to bowel and bladder. He underwent three months of residential training in a social rehabilitation center where he was trained in [horticulture](#),¹⁶ specifically in nursery, raising vegetables and agro-based products (use of agricultural products as basic raw material for producing seeds, cereals, and grains). He re-integrated into his family and played a major role in raising the kitchen garden and nursery in their agriculture garden through utilizing organic manure for organic farming and earned a livelihood out of it.

- b) *Case 2: (Vermicompost):* Mr. M, a 21 year old male from rural Karnataka state with hearing impairment and depression, was supported by a local NGO, where he received a year-long training in life skills, horticulture and [vermicompost](#)¹⁷ (composting using a variety of worms and organic matter). After returning home, he was able to set up a vermicompost pit and has taught everyone in the family how to maintain it and generate vermicompost as a living. This case provides an example of how environmentally sustainable activities can help in personal recovery of persons with multiple disabilities.
- c) *Case 3: ([Upcycling/Recycling of waste](#)):*¹⁸ Mr. K, a 43 year old male, receiving treatment for a severe mental disorder, started collecting used newspapers and made paper bags for the pharmacy shops to pack medicines. His business gained importance when the Indian government banned plastic bags as part of its eco-friendly initiative. Today, he, along with his family members, supply paper covers for all the pharmacy shops in their town. This activity boosted his self-esteem, helped in his personal recovery with mental illness and helped him gain respect and recognition for himself and his family.
- d) *Case 4 (Non-degradable waste collection):* Mrs. S, a 33 year old homemaker diagnosed with a mood disorder, was part of an income generation activity of pig rearing as part of a

self-help group. She started collecting non-degradable waste (i.e., bodily waste from the chicken shop), cooked it and fed the pigs without any cost towards breeding. This had a reciprocal benefit for the chicken shop owner and for Mrs. S as the owner was able to get rid of all the waste and Mrs. S was able to feed her pigs for six months without any cost and gained 300% of profit while able to stay at home, allowing her to maintain household chores.

- e) *Case study 5 (Lake restoration)*: Mrs. K, a 38 year old, single parent of a daughter suffering from cerebral palsy, was diagnosed as having depression. The rehabilitation worker in the district got her a job card for eligibility to work under a government program (the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MNREGS)) for community development activities. Mrs. K was involved in a lake restoration activity (removing silt from the lakes). The restoration of lakes helped create more storage for rainwater, enhanced agricultural yields and income in the community.

Many countries lack resources in providing quality care (treatment and rehabilitation) for people with mental illness in their own communities. Community based rehabilitation activities of converting the local untapped natural resources for the rehabilitation of persons with mental illness can be a sustainable model, which would strengthen the community in which they live. Facilitating experience of dignified life for persons with mental illness through engaging in income generating livelihood activities using optimum utilization of natural resources is not just a viable environmental sustainability model, but also an effective community sustainability model.

Building healthy and sustainable communities which accommodate the needs of persons with mental illness would reduce stigma, thereby improve their mental health and well-being. This will also have an impact on overall sustainable development goals of the community. For example, this model would help by increasing

purchasing power (poverty: SDG goal 1 and economic growth: goal 8), enhancing social status and living in the family and the community (safe and resilient settlements: goal 11), enhancing nutritional status (health: goal 3), and promote better negotiations within marital relationships.

Application:

Exercise: Connecting Mental Health and Environmental Well-being

Instructions: After reviewing the lesson above consider each case study and answer the following discussion questions. You may also consider case examples in your own community that can help in the process of personal recovery with mental health problems. These activities could be for preservation, promotion and/or utilization of natural resources in the community.

Discussion Questions:

1. What is the synergic relationship between a human being and their environment for better mental health and well-being?
2. What are some of the livelihood activities that could promote both environmental and social sustainability?
3. What are the ways in which social workers can be involved in the personal recovery and rehabilitation of persons with mental health disorders by promoting the reciprocal relationship with environmental well-being?
4. How could social workers help service consumers to use plentiful natural resources available for their own rehabilitation and thereby contribute to environmental sustainability?
5. How can clinical social workers focus more on macro level environmental issues in relation to practice as well as individual care plans to aid in personal recovery in their service consumers and the broader community?

Summary Notes:

Enhancing community natural resources would sustain mental health care within their own community, fulfill the aim of mainstreaming in community life through community participation and owing within their community and reduces ill-effects of stigma attached towards mental illness which can be better understood and evolve strategies to deal in their own communities. People with mental illness not only receive mental health services but also are able to contribute towards environmental sustainability utilizing the natural resources available in their own community. Plentiful of natural resources available at their disposal can be raw materials for the livelihood activities for people with mental illness and by this would be discharging their responsibilities towards environmental sustainability. Rehabilitation for people with mental illness is more suitable for developing countries like rural India, would relieve the caregivers stress, and thereby enhances their health and well-being adding to community health and well-being. A different and better world for people with mental illness can be created using natural resources available in their own community, where in the communities facilitate rehabilitation, resulting in enhancing the community health.

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Additional Resources:

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Chapter 4: SDG 4: Quality Education

Transforming Education: Self-directed Learning to Foster Imagination and Create Social and Environmental Sustainability

By *Pascal Rudin*

Author biography:

Pascal Rudin is a Social Worker with experience in child protection in Ghana and Switzerland. As a representative to the United Nations for the International Federation of Social Workers, he aims to enrich the discourse on children's rights from the perspective of Social Work. Pascal currently pursues a PhD in Social Work, focusing on ADHD in children. pascal.rudin@ifsw.org – www.rudinweb.com

Learning Outcomes:

1. Understand what the right to education entails, and how “quality” may vary across cultures.
2. Explore the role of social work in connection with SDG 4: Quality Education.
3. Articulate the benefits of self-directed learning options as the possibility of transforming education.

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By embracing the ecosocial worldview we can shift the discussion and actions around the SDGs, taking a transformative approach that offers a critical understanding that the “triple bottom line” of sustainable development is not actually possible. Competition and scarcity

undergird the growth ideology, where sustainable development is located, and in that model profit will always prevail over the aspirations of meeting the supposed competing needs of people and planet. Ultimately this framework will only serve to further perpetuate ecological injustices and power imbalances.

Degrowth involves localizing solutions and is not only about a shift in economic ideology, but in a revisioned society that lives cooperation, sharing the abundance, and reciprocity-based relationships among people and the planet. This revisioning necessitates identifying alternative measures of “success” which should not be wedded to mere economic gain. Within the growth ideology, our current indicators are flawed as they only measure limited aspects associated with economic growth and promote solutions which give preference to profit and primarily benefit those with power. Instead, we can adopt non-economically centered indicators of prosperity that are within the ecosocial worldview. These measures determine success within the context of the interdependent well-being of people and planet (e.g., time, relationships, health, etc.). By moving *beyond* sustainable development to degrowth as transformational alternatives, we can open up the opportunities for truly sustainable solutions.

Lesson:

“The true sign of intelligence is not knowledge, but imagination.”

~ Albert Einstein

This chapter introduces the Sustainable Development Goal 4 “Quality Education” and discusses it within the wider human rights framework. It then goes on to problematise forced schooling and its possible effects. As a case example, the labelling of undesired behaviour as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder is being problematised. The paper finally discusses possible harms of contemporary hegemonic

approaches to education and offers some insights into alternatives to coercive schooling.

Quality Education as a Human Right

We currently live in a world that has more knowledge than ever before, but due to economic, social and environmental circumstances, not everyone can benefit from it. In the wake of the Millenium Development Goals, countries have made major strides in increasing access to education at all levels. As a consequence, basic literacy skills have improved tremendously, and both school enrolment and completion rates keep increasing. Despite all these perceived successes, several gaps remain. For example, many children are still being deprived of education, gender equality remains a serious concern, and mental health problems in children are on the rise. Considering these issues, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) identified quality education as a primary concern:

Achieving inclusive and quality education for all reaffirms the belief that education is one of the most powerful and proven vehicles for sustainable development. This goal ensures that all girls and boys complete free primary and secondary schooling by 2030. It also aims to provide equal access to affordable vocational training, to eliminate gender and wealth disparities, and achieve universal access to a quality higher education.¹

The link between education and sustainable development is fundamental:

Education is the foundation of sustainable development, and therefore of the SDGs. As a policy intervention, education is a force multiplier which enables self-reliance, boosts economic growth by enhancing skills, and improves people's lives by opening up opportunities for better livelihoods. While education is indispensable for the achievement of sustainable development, it is also a fundamental human right.²

Since the adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (hereafter Convention) in 1989, there has been an emergence of global activity to promote its stipulated principles, including the right to education. An additional core value of the spirit of children's rights is the inherent dignity of the child. This concept entitles human beings to an 'essential, irreducible morality and dignity independent of the social groups to which they belong and the social roles they occupy'.³ The Convention always relates to dignity in situations where the danger of its violation is regarded as to be particularly high. These include detention, rehabilitation after abuse, and exploitation, as well as procedures regarding discipline in schools. For that reason, it is not enough to merely protect dignity, one must provide an environment that enables the child to face and feel this dignity. Kerber-Ganse describes this as a process of 'empowerment through experience of inherent dignity and promotion of self-esteem'.⁴

While the spirit of human rights can be seen as the idea of the human being as part of a greater society, relating to theories formulated by philosophers such as Hobbes and Aristotle,⁵ there has recently been a significant shift to the individual. The child is no longer only entitled to protection but seen as an individual with his/her own interests and rights. Involving the child in all processes that concerns him or her, therefore, becomes crucial. Let us consider the core principle of participation in some more depth. Liebel distinguishes between three aspects of education in relation to children's rights: The right to education, the rights within education, and the rights through education.⁶ The aims of education are therefore 'to empower the child by developing his or her skills, learning and other capacities, human dignity, self-esteem and self-confidence'.⁷ Let's have a brief look at children's rights with regard to education and how they are connected to the hegemonic approaches of education.

Hegemonic Approaches to Education

In the last two centuries, childhood has been increasingly institutionalised through two tendencies, namely familiarisation and scholarisation.⁸ These two institutions, school and family, constitute

the legitimate space for use by children. However, since the adoption of the Convention, the family has increasingly been affected by the shift of child welfare attention from the family to the individual child, which is described as de-familiarisation. At the same time, scholarisation has been intensified through increased public child care and the promotion of institutionalised learning.

Scholarisation

According to Foucault, the school can be seen as 'moral technology', as a way governments seek to shape the behaviour of human beings.⁹ This technology, among others, is 'concerned with behaviour and with adopting and internalising ideas about how a moral person should think and feel' and is particularly relevant regarding the socialisation of children.⁹ In order to use education as a tool for social reform, school education has been promoted through the separation of labour and learning, and children have been increasingly expected to attend these institutionalised forms of formal education. This coerced attendance of school education through free, compulsory education has been criticised by scholars as a violation of the individual rights of the child. For example, Liebel argues that compulsory school attendance undermines the fundamental idea of democracy.¹⁰ Indeed, having in mind the important role school plays in the lives of children, this institutionalised form of education reduces the subjectivity of the individual child to some extent, as there is often little room on the part of children to freely choose how to claim their right to education.

Managing Deviations

Bühler-Niederberger argues that the emphasis on standardised development causes an exaggerated sensibility to even the smallest of deviations, and that this leads to an increased amount of intervention carried out by professionals.¹¹ For example, she problematises how vague definitions and findings regarding dyslexia have been used to generalise approaches to treatment and how this has been affecting growing populations of school-aged children¹¹. Among the mounting cases of dyslexia there are to be found many other patterns which tend to pathologise pupils and to produce a

wide range of special needs services, including but not limited to school social work, school counselling, medicinal treatment of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), speech therapy, and play therapy. Although these institutionalised forms of interventions reflect the individual focus stipulated by the Convention and reshape the subjectivity of children, they seem to fail in terms of participation. As a result, this standardisation of procedures of diagnosis and therapy potentially leads to stigmatisation of a growing number of children.⁸ Of particular concern in this context are the rising number of children labelled to have ADHD.

The Case of ADHD

The phenomenon of ADHD has received significant attention in the last decade, both in academia and in the media. The ambiguity of its core symptoms, the international inconsistency of diagnostic processes and guidelines, and the growing global use of psychotropic drugs to treat ADHD are the central concerns in the contemporary discourse (see Rafalovich¹² for further discussion). Despite all research efforts it has been difficult to gain and maintain agreement on what ADHD is or what should be done about it.

So, what is ADHD? According to the DSM-5 published by the American psychiatric profession, it is a brain-based disorder, whereas inattention, hyperactivity and impulsiveness constitute the core triad of symptomatic behaviours. The constant widening of the definition of ADHD over the last decades allowed to diagnose children with or without hyperactivity, and with or without other diagnostic labels.¹³ With the advent of DSM-5, ADHD has become even more inclusive, and through disease-mongering, it has been blown up out of all proportion.¹⁴ Given these circumstances, it does not surprise that epidemiological studies find prevalence rates of ADHD of up to 26%.¹⁵ In other words, up to one in four children are believed to have ADHD.

Without dismissing the fact that there are certain rare circumstances in which the use of psychotropic drugs may be a useful part of an overall treatment plan, it is now almost universal acknowledgement regarding the overdiagnosis and overmedication of children in the context of ADHD.¹⁶

In contrast to a simplified biomedical model, Thomas Szasz suggested that since there is no demonstrable biological pathology, mental illnesses such as ADHD is a metaphor for culturally disapproved thoughts, feelings, and, particularly, behaviours.¹⁷In a similar vein, Singh, drawing on the work of Conrad and Schneider,¹⁸ argues that ADHD ‘modifies, regulates and eliminates deviant behaviour with a diagnostic label and a punishment in the form of drug treatment’.¹⁹

Against this backdrop, it appears to be worthwhile to take on a broader view in order to tackle this issue in more depth. This chapter now goes on to problematise formal education and offers some considerations on how we can do better.

Problematizing Formal Education

Children, by nature, are well equipped with all the means necessary to direct their own education. They are from birth highly auto-didactic and learn through observing, questioning, playing and exploring. If their environment is supportive, they can use their educative instincts to flourish. Apart from the schools that are the dominant forms of educational institutions in the contemporary world, there is a remarkable world of ideas about education out there, ideas that challenge the contemporary understanding of how children learn, what is best for them, and how they may claim their very right to education best. These ideas are also much in line with the SDGs, as they ask for quality within education. Quality that comes from a grassroot approach, namely from children themselves. Real alternatives already exist and include democratic schools, self-directed homeschooling, and resource centres. All these approaches have one thing in common: they build on the natural love for learning in children and nurture traits such as playfulness, initiative, participation and creativity. As a result, children experience satisfaction with their learning processes.

The next few paragraphs examine how children learn, how forced schooling undermines their learning processes and puts them at risk of harm, and how self-directed learning fosters healthy learning.

How Children Learn

Children come into the world with powerful educative instincts, such as natural curiosity, attentiveness to the activities around them, desire to do what older children and adults can do, sociability and playfulness. They are quite connected to the environment (both built and natural) around them, and learn to walk, run, climb and jump with essentially no instruction. They have open minds and are often quite connected to the wider natural and spiritual world around them.

Through watching, questioning, listening and other forms of exploring, they acquire an enormous amount of knowledge about the physical and social world around them. Above that, through free play, they continuously practice skills that foster healthy physical, emotional, social and intellectual development. Their amazing internal drive and capacity to explore, examine and learn is quite inspiring. Rather than building on this drive, however, modern schools tend to undermine this inherent capacity. While children usually look forward to starting school, they often become disappointed, unmotivated and lose faith in their own capacities even after only a few weeks of formal schooling. What they learn in school is that learning is work, and by all means to be avoided if possible.²⁰

This amazing drive and capacity to learn does not turn itself off when children turn five or six. We turn it off with our system of schooling. The biggest, most enduring lesson of this schooling is that learning is work, to be avoided when possible. In many parts of the world, particularly in so-called 'highly developed countries', children's opportunities to play freely with other children have continuously declined. Schooling and other adult-directed activities tend to absorb more time than ever, while simultaneously, exposure to nature has been declined dramatically. This to the extent that Richard Louv even talks about a 'nature deficit disorder'.²¹ Both play and nature deprivation are significantly affecting the wellbeing of children. Foremost, mental health problems such as childhood anxiety, ADHD, depression and suicide are on the rise. Further concerning effects include a decline in empathy, a rise in narcissism, a decline in

creativity and, most importantly, a decline in children's sense of control over their own lives.

How Forced Schooling Harms Children

Children spend the majority of their days being passively instructed in blocks of 45 minutes, are made to sit still and are examined regularly through standardised test. Many of them are being forced to attend a particular school with their participatory rights being ignored. A situation that Peter Gray calls "imprisonment schooling".²² Most children today receive a similar form of formal education, regardless of their personalities and differences in their interests. They are being grouped by age, told what they are supposed to "know", assessed through standardised testing and being punished if their grades differ from the age cohort with which they were forced to "learn". Ignoring critique from various fields, including childhood studies,⁹ Pedagogy²⁰ and Psychology,²² this form of education is not only completely at odds with how children learn best, it also sets the stage for a variety of unfortunate consequences.

While some children cope better with the demands of formal education, others suffer significantly. Increasingly, they are being labelled as disorderly, anti-social, ADHD or even learning disabled. However, rather than blaming teachers, parents or even children themselves, it is time to stop asking what is wrong with these children and start asking what form of education may suit them better. The current school is not only a "curiosity-killing institution",²² it also completely lacks the quality in education as demanded by the SDGs. Such quality would reveal itself if education would be inspiring, fostering creativity and inquisitiveness, would be fun and engaging, unique to each individual. Ultimately, quality education would foster life skills, citizenship, personal responsibility and the endeavour for life-long learning.

As Czerny problematises, the love of discovering and learning is often already destroyed in early years of formal education.²⁰ Through standardised testing, students are from an early age made to feel less than their peers, which often leads to an internal perception that they are less talented and ultimately less valuable. Such early negative

experiences in the school setting foster negative assessments that can become self-prophesies. Students that underperform may adopt a self-concept of failure, despite the fact that biologically, human intellectual capabilities can increase dramatically over the years. Further negative consequences of the contemporary school system include the loss of creativity, excessive compliance that undermines high-level critical thinking, and bullying. But even children that seem to thrive 'may also be carrying around the pain that dulls curiosity, limits creativity, stifles imagination, and ultimately may one day lead to inertia and depression'.²³

How We Can do Better

Benefits of self-directed learning: Self-directed learning is more than just a new approach to education. It is a whole new way of living, reflecting the belief that children have the right to follow their own paths. This reflects the spirit of the Convention on the Rights of the child, always considering that to living their own lives and exerting their own rights also means not to interfere with the rights of others to do the same. Self-directed fosters the creation of a collaborative culture that values individual liberties while simultaneously supporting liberty and justice for all. It is a way of life that steers attention to the importance of environmental empathy, as well as to economic, social and cultural sustainability. Some of the most significant benefits of self-directed learning include the development of self-confidence in children, the opportunity to pursue a far wider range of interests than is possible in formal education, and the support of a collaborative culture within the family and the wider society.

Promotion of self-confidence, initiative, perseverance and life satisfaction: Rather than being completely determined in the learning process by formal education, self-directed learning invites children to become in charge of their own lives. This does not mean that environmental circumstances and biological disposition do not have an influence on the lives of children, but it does mean that children, once they become of age, are responsible for making choices that help create their own paths. Self-directed learning, through practice,

fosters the ability in children to make sound, self-affirming choices. Mindfulness, which in this context may be understood as the ability in children to read their own ideas, feelings and needs, increases the chance that children grow into sensible, mature, compassionate and healthy adults.

Preventing potentially life-long wounds: Self-directed learning decreases the probability that children will face systematic degradation that is commonly produced in formal education. This does not mean that no one will ever say anything derisive to them, suggest that they are incompetent or call them stupid. However, these experiences will not be systemic. In public schools, placing children in lower achieving groups, grading them with low marks, labelling them as unmotivated, lazy, hyperactive or even learning-disabled is quite common and commonly produces wounds that may last a life long.²³ Through systemic violence, the school teaches children to feel stupid.²⁴ Even high achievers are not impervious to the latent fear that she or he may, at any time, be exposed as failure, when both failure and success are measured against arbitrary standardised tests. Quite in contrast to such an approach, self-directed learning fosters better listening and learning in children. Following their own paths allows children to learn at their pace, according to their interests and in line with their very own development. When their self-esteem is not being undermined through constant systemic violence, children tend to be much more open and inquisitive in their lives.

Pursuing a wide range of interests: Since self-directed learning is not bound to a pre-defined curriculum, a fixed schedule and standardised testing. Rather, it comes with the ability to accommodate the needs and interests of individuals and provides opportunities to pursue a far wider range of topics. And even the subjects that are within the school curriculum may be explored in a more meaningful way and in greater depth. For example, children can opt to build and sail a boat, rather than merely reading about how others have done so or discover plants and trees in the woods rather than simply identify them in a book. If the boat sinks, this may be the perfect opportunity

to learn about what it takes to make a boat float, and to learn from the previous mistakes. Children will then have time to actually take it for a sail, and by sailing, they may even discover an entirely new set of interests. While there will still be restrictions that limits what may be doable, these will not be the result of pre-defined curriculums.

Collaboration with peers, the family and the community: While most sceptics fear that self-directed learning will lead to narcissism and egoism, experience has demonstrated that the opposite is the case. When children and their parents are free to create, discuss, design, explore and negotiate what will best serve their desires, they tend to be comfortable and deeply sensitive to the needs of others.²⁵ Children who feel in charge of their own lives are more likely to understand and accept the rights and responsibilities that are enshrined in the Convention. As a consequence, they are also more likely to support self-direction in humans around them. Rather than seeking power over others, children tend to work collaboratively and empower each other.

Alternatives to Coercive Schooling

Currently there are three main alternatives to the hegemonic formal education: (i) home-based learning, (ii) democratic schools and (iii) community resource centres. The next paragraphs briefly introduce these alternatives.

Home-based learning: Home-based self-directed learning is a great opportunity for parents who enjoy watching and helping their children learn and grow. Although this form requires some flexibility on the part of parents in accommodating their schedules, it does not necessarily mean that one parent needs to stay at home full-time. Some families for example have a cooperative arrangement with other families, with childcare providers, or find ways to perform their work alongside their children. Furthermore, children will become more independent once they are mature enough. Home, however, should only be the base, while much of the learning can take place in the wider community²⁶. There are many resources available to support home-based learning, such as home-schooling groups, library

activities and guided excursions. This wider community approach to home-schooling will help children to form friendships, to explore nature, and to develop environmental consciousness and empathy.

Democratic schools: One of the first democratic schools has been developed by Janusz Korczak,²⁷ a medical doctor and great pedagogue (for a good introduction to his humanist moral education, please see Silverman).²⁸ The basic foundation of such schools is that children are entitled to all the rights and responsibilities of democratic citizenship. Rather than just read about it, children truly practice the fundamental principles of free speech, free association, and freedom to choose their own activities. This includes also to vote on the rules that affect them, and to serve term on juries to try those accused of violating these rules. Democratic schools are therefore a great opportunity to practice democratic citizenship even from a young age. Children are trusted to take responsibility for their own lives and learning processes, and for the wider school community. Since children choose themselves which activities they want to take, and with whom they want to associate. Many of these schools do not segregate students by age, allowing them to learn from others that are younger or older than themselves. The adult members of such school communities are there to help, not to direct. They enrich the community with their experience and commitment.²⁹

Resource centres: Resource centres usually offer freedom of activity similar to that of democratic schools, organised classes with adults, and help children to access various services and learning opportunities. They differ considerably in how they operate, but their common aim is to help families begin to create the kinds of connections that address both their intellectual and emotional needs. The following overview is in no way complete, as this would go far beyond the scope of this chapter. However, the presented information aims to broaden the thinking of the reader, and to challenge the assumption that children can only claim their right to education when they are at school. Generally, there appears to be at least three major distinguishing characteristics among the various

centres. While all of them have in common that they serve children and their families who are registered as home-schoolers, they considerably differ in their scope.

- Some basically provide classes that are led by adults (often by parent members) that can resemble regular school classes. However, they do not perform tests or give grades.
- Other resource centres are considerably more self-directed in terms of structure but may still feature classes that are led by adults. They offer learning experiences in the context of purposeful activities, which is commonly referred to as real-world approach. These centres actively help children to become self-directed learners, and they work without tests, grades, transcripts and curriculum. Often, they include a tutoring system, where older children help younger children to follow their aspirations. Above that, every child is being assigned an adult advisor. In regularly held meetings, children are invited to exercise their citizenship rights and to shape the rules of these centres, much like in democratic schools.
- Finally, there are hybrid resource centres that offer more of the services one would expect in a school-like community. They allow children a great deal of self-direction in their educational and pedagogical orientation, but also expect them to attend programs on a part-time basis. Such centres usually consult with children, but do not directly involve them in the management of the centre.

Other community resources include libraries, bookstores, scout organisations, community supported agriculture projects, nature centres, museums, historic sites, art centres, factories, friends and relatives, Sports, Music, Dance, Theater, volunteering, internships and apprenticeships. Finally, there are many resources that can be accessed online, for example Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC), which allow children to explore topics through digital technologies. There is also a trend to enrich such online experiences with augmented and virtual reality.

Summary: Transforming Education – A Vision for the Future

Children in self-directed learning are a marvellous sight – fully alive to the world and to learning.³⁰ For many children, this is already a reality, particularly for those who enjoy the opportunity and privilege of home-based self-directed learning, democratic schools and/or community-based resource centres. These models allow children and adults to learn as they play, explore, and build relationships with each other, their communities and the natural world. Through a rich list of resources, children can dive into the digital world, aided through virtual reality. Yet, even without technology, children can play in natural areas (e.g., forests and parks) and learn more about its inhabitants and how they are connected to the natural environment. They can learn more about trades such as wood-working, painting, programming, accounting, playing music or any other subject they may be interested in. Since such self-directed learning models do not segregate children according to their age, younger children can continuously practice higher ways of thinking and learn new skills, while older children benefit from synthesizing their knowledge and developing nurturing skills. Additionally, through a democratic system, whether employed in home-schools, democratic schools or in resource centres, empowers children to participate in governing their educational systems, deciding on the rules of behaviour, and the means to enforce them. Such self-directed learning models allow for a new vision for the future which can transform education. This will not only allow for the mere rights of the child to an education, but also ensure they have educational opportunities that honour their dignity and create true quality education. In light of the aforementioned challenges of coercive education, we must stop perpetuating the wrong types of educational systems in the name of children's rights. If given the right to true, quality education in self-directed learning models, children will learn to navigate their own emotions and personalities, strengthen family and community relationships, cultivate their natural wonder and curiosity, develop environmental consciousness and empathy, and create novel solutions to social and environmental sustainability. Children are our future, let us create a world where their imagination can flourish.

Application:

Exercise 1: Compulsory Education or Freedom to Learn

1. Does the right to education require the forced enrolment of children into schools? Discuss.
2. Articulate your own view of child friendly education.

Exercise 2: “ADHD” and “Nature Deficit”

1. Inattention, hyperactivity and impulsiveness are believed to be core symptoms of “ADHD”. Can you think of any other meaning that could be assigned to these behavioural patterns?
2. What is “nature deficit” and how have you experienced this in your own life, or witnessed it in the lives of children you know?

Exercise 3: Alternatives to Coercive Schooling

1. How could alternatives to coercive schooling help foster in children more meaningful connections to community and nature and desire to work towards sustainability?
2. What are ways you, as a social worker, could promote alternatives to coercive schooling?

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Chapter 5: SDG 5: Gender Equality

Gender, Environmental Degradation and Eco-feminism

By Karen Bell, Karen Kime and Heather Boetto

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Learning Outcomes:

1. Understand the social work connections with SDG 5: Gender Equality.
2. Understand gender oppression (patriarchal power, privilege), feminisation of poverty and the gendered impacts of ecological degradation and climate change.
3. Locate eco-feminist perspectives in relation to dominant discourses.
4. Identify how these perspectives can inform holistic eco-social practice.

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Editors' Degrowth Critique Summary of SDGs By Meredith Powers & Michaela Rinkel

Please see the Overview Chapter of this [Volume 3](#) of the edited workbook series, *Social Work Promoting Community and Environmental Sustainability*, for a more complete discussion of the ecosocial worldview and the editors' degrowth critique on the growth model, sustainable development and the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

This summary is offered not as a critique of the authors' chapter, but as a prompt to consider the chapter content in light of a call to engage in practice **within and beyond** the SDG framework.

Social work practice is clearly connected to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). As partners with and leaders in many communities where the work related to the SDGs occurs, we must consider our role in promoting community and environmental

sustainability, ***within and beyond*** the SDGs. While we need to be well versed in the SDG language and concepts and involved in conversations and actions with global partners for the SDGs, we must maintain a critical eye on the limitations of this framework and help shift the conversation towards genuine solutions (i.e. which can be sustained in the long term). We maintain that this shift involves embracing an ecosocial worldview and taking a degrowth approach for transformational alternatives to sustainable development.

Despite the admirable idea to include sustainability (which originates in an ecosocial worldview) with development (which is based on an anthropocentric worldview) to create “sustainable development”, it merely created another model which ultimately is still situated in the anthropogenic, capitalist growth economic paradigm. This growth ideology keeps perpetuating the unsustainable and unjust byproducts of growth, which cannot lead to true sustainability as injustice is inherent in this model.

This volume of the workbook series is thus, an attempt to demonstrate to the profession our relevance to the SDGs, as well as to demonstrate to the world that social work is essential to the realization of sustainability, ***within and beyond*** the SDGs.

Within: What social work brings to the SDGs

Working to eradicate the injustices that stem from poverty, inequality, and oppression is at the core mission of social work and encompasses each of the 17 SDGs. For example, poverty and inequality impacts overall well-being, health, and civic participation, and oppression, affecting both people and planet. When we operate ***within*** the current framework of the SDGs, social work promotes solutions that impact multiple SDGs at once, such as universal social protection systems, fair and ethical employment practices, democratic participation, and sustainable natural resource management.

The social work profession’s unique perspectives and skill sets are sorely needed. These include our emphasis on social justice,

empowerment, the strengths perspective, and the person in environment perspective (also known as people as place), along with the approach of using a systems framework. These social work perspectives help to make more evident the power dynamics that exist and highlight the ways they are changed as we work to alleviate injustices related to poverty, inequality, and oppression, often connected to environmental and ecological injustices. Working within the SDG framework which uses the “triple bottom line” of sustainable development (i.e., the advancement of people, profit, and planet) we can help bring ecological justice to the forefront. However, with an ecosocial lens we can also move beyond sustainable development to shift the conversation and create truly sustainable solutions.

Beyond: Shifting to ecosocial worldview and degrowth

By embracing the ecosocial worldview we can shift the discussion and actions around the SDGs, taking a transformative approach that offers a critical understanding that the “triple bottom line” of sustainable development is not actually possible. Competition and scarcity undergird the growth ideology, where sustainable development is located, and in that model profit will always prevail over the aspirations of meeting the supposed competing needs of people and planet. Ultimately this framework will only serve to further perpetuate ecological injustices and power imbalances.

Degrowth involves localizing solutions and is not only about a shift in economic ideology, but in a revised society that lives cooperation, sharing the abundance, and reciprocity-based relationships among people and the planet. This revisioning necessitates identifying alternative measures of “success” which should not be wedded to mere economic gain. Within the growth ideology, our current indicators are flawed as they only measure limited aspects associated with economic growth and promote solutions which give preference to profit and primarily benefit those with power. Instead, we can adopt non-economically centered indicators of prosperity that are within the ecosocial worldview. These measures determine success within the context of the interdependent well-being of people and planet (e.g., time, relationships, health, etc.). By moving *beyond*

sustainable development to degrowth as transformational alternatives, we can open up the opportunities for truly sustainable solutions.

Lesson:

This lesson focuses on Sustainable Development Goal 5 – Gender Equality – as it explores eco-feminism, gender oppression, the gendered impacts of environmental degradation and climate change. It also outlines how eco-feminism can inform eco-social approaches to practice. In the preamble to the United Nations’ *Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (2015)¹ the key goals for our world are identified as universal peace, poverty eradication, and healing our planet to ensure sustainability and resilience for all. Efforts to achieve global transformation are described as collective and there is a specific pledge to realise the human rights of all and to achieve gender equity for women and girls. This pledge underpins the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for global action. Along with a generic goal (SDG 10) for reduced inequalities, there is a specific goal for gender equality (SDG 5).

The lesson is based on a week-long learning module from a semester-long course developed by the authors to explore holistic ecosocial practice in the human services.² The learning material is appropriate for individual engagement, as well as for groups. Participation is possible via online or on-campus delivery and the range of material will appeal to varied learning styles. Stimulus material is included in each section of the module and questions for consideration are proposed to encourage critical reflection and peer-to-peer interaction. The reader is provided with material about gender oppression as a global issue, eco-feminism is defined, and the work of some key theorists is explored in relation to eco-social practice.

In the concluding section we outline how eco-feminism can inform eco-social practice. Using an online case study as a basis for critical reflection, we explore the multidimensional impacts of

environmental degradation via a structured learning activity with stimulus questions for discussion and guided reflection.

Gender and the Environment

The following material helps students to reflect on how environmental degradation and climate change affects all living and nonliving things and to understand why gender should be brought into sharper focus as we work towards social and environmental justice.

Defining ‘gender’: Gender is a contested term and in this lesson we draw on material from the World Health Organisation (WHO) to define gender as a relational concept, shaped by interactions between people with respect to their gender identity and socially constructed gender roles. Patterns of interaction and social norms based on ascribed gender impact at all levels – from the micro level (e.g. individual interactions, families and groups, etc.) through to macro levels of society (e.g. communities, organisations, policy, cultural values, etc.). It should be noted that while gender is predominantly constructed as a binary concept referring to categories of female and male, gender can also be considered to be a fluid concept with many possibilities and variations in gendered identity along a continuum of human experience. For more information on defining gender, go to [WHO - Gender, equity and human rights](#).³

While it is possible to construct gender as a fluid concept, the dominant, conventional discourse of gender reflects a binary approach, with socially constructed roles and behaviours for women and for men. This dominant form of ‘gender’ underpins patterns of relative advantage and disadvantage between humans identified as female and humans identified as male. This dominant form of gender typically privileges male over female. These entrenched patterns of power, privilege, advantage and disadvantage impact in all spheres of existence including health, wealth, safety, education, and experiences of the natural environment.

Environmental degradation and climate change affects us all, but those already at a disadvantage experience cumulative disadvantage in the face of climate change.² Worldwide, although there have been positive changes in some indicators of social justice, women and girls still experience barriers to education, equal pay and equal opportunity, when compared to men and boys. Females are more likely to be caught in a cycle of poverty, with women making up 70% of the world's poorest people. When there are fewer resources on hand to buffer the impacts of climate change and environmental degradation those impacts are more keenly felt ([United Nations Women](#)).⁴ This then perpetuates a pattern of cumulative, gender disadvantage.

Gender oppression: The UN documentation consistently identifies gender inequity as a persistent, global issue. Gender equity (SDG 5) is central to the transformation of our world as we work for human rights, peace and sustainability. Violence against women and girls is also highlighted as a major human rights challenge with devastating impacts on all people regardless of age, location, class or ethnicity.

Application:

Exercise 1: Exploring the UN Sustainable Development Goals in Relation to Gender Equity.

For more detail on SDGs, go to the website: [UN sustainable development goals](#)⁵

Explore the UN website, paying particular attention to SDG 5 - *Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls*.

- Find information on some of the initiatives relevant to SDG 5 already underway; for example the *Spotlight Initiative*.
 - Describe the *Spotlight Initiative* and what it aims to achieve.
 - Why is it called the *spotlight* initiative?
 - Identify the particular issues upon which this initiative will focus.

- Do you already take action to contribute to the broad aims of this initiative? If so, in what ways? How could you extend your contribution to this SDG? If this is being undertaken as a group activity, share your reflections with your peers.
- As you explore the UN website in more detail, what are some of the other initiatives relevant to SDG 5? What are some of the 'gains' already made?
- What are the 'goal 5 targets'?
- Check out some of the links to other initiatives and consider how you could become involved.

Patriarchal Power and Privilege

In this section, we outline activities to explore why gender oppression is such an entrenched, global issue manifesting itself in various human rights violations and patterns of disadvantage.

Patriarchy is a social system whereby humans identified as male are valued and privileged over those identified as female or 'other'. Formalised leadership roles, political power, citizenship rights, authority, resources and status are disproportionately ascribed to males. The lived experiences of males who conform to conventional gender roles are typically used as a standard reference point for most human experience. These patterns of privilege are often reflected in multidimensional ways through cultural practices and language whereby 'female' is subjugated to the 'male'. Patterns of gendered violence are central to the oppression of women. Patriarchy also impacts knowledge-building in many ways; for example, who is regarded as a 'rational', who is regarded as a legitimate 'knower' and who is 'heard' are all influenced by conventional, binary constructions of gender. Thus patriarchy operates in public, as well as private spaces, to reproduce patterns of oppression.⁶

Violence: The World Health Organisation describes violence against women and girls as a major, global human rights issue with one in every three women experiencing violence in their lifetime. WHO also notes that men are most likely to perpetuate violence against women and girls, as well as against other men and boys.

Exercise 2: Violence against women and girls – exploring global patterns

For more details on gendered patterns of violence, go to the website: WHO - [Violence against women](#) ⁷ After reading through the factsheet on the website about violence against women, consider the following issues:

- As violence against women and girls is a global and persistent human rights violation, what do you think produces and reproduces it?
- What are the risk factors identified on the WHO factsheet?
- What sorts of political (and other) changes might reduce violence?
- Are there programs to address violence in your local community?

Feminisation of poverty: According to data from the United Nations ([United Nations Women: The Feminization of Poverty](#)), ⁸ the majority of the world's poorest people are women. Over the last decade, global disparities in aggregate levels of income between men and women have grown rather than shrunk with women typically earning a little more than 50% of what men earn for comparable work. What has this got to do with climate change? The adverse impacts of climate change and environmental degradation affects all people, but those who are already impacted by some form(s) of disadvantage will experience cumulative disadvantage as the world's natural environment further deteriorates. For example, those who are already finding it difficult to afford decent food will experience even higher levels of food insecurity with ongoing environmental degradation.

Exercise 3: Exploring Intersections Between Environmental Degradation and Poverty

On the *United Nations entity for gender equality and the empowerment of women* website - [United Nations Women: The Feminization of Poverty](#) ⁸ read factsheet number 1 'The feminization of poverty'

- After reading the factsheet description of how poverty, location, gender and ethnicity intersect in relation to climate change and environmental degradation, using your own words, write a description of this interconnectedness using your own words.
- What are some of the strategies for change outlined on the factsheet?
- In what ways are these issues relevant in your own community?
- Are there any poverty alleviation programs in your local area? Do any of them focus on gender specifically?

Exercise 4: Gendered Impacts of Ecological Degradation and Climate Change

Watch this short video from the United Nations Development Program:

[Climate Change & Gender \(2 minutes 34 seconds\)](#)⁹

The video summarises some of the key issues affecting women and girls in relation to climate change. It also outlines some important strategies for social and environmental justice and efforts to mitigate and adapt to climate change.

After watching the video, scroll down to read the first few public comments posted in response to the video. You might see some comments along the lines of '*climate change and environmental degradation affects us all – why focus on women and girls?*'

- What is your response to this?
- Can you describe a rationale to critique or support your stance?

The following video also describes climate change in relation to gender. In addition, it outlines how Indigenous knowledges can be a basis for transformational change for environmental and social justice.

[Climate Change: What's Gender Got To Do With It?](#)¹⁰ (2 minutes 16 seconds)

- What did you learn about –
 - Political representation around the world?
 - Access to clean water?
 - Indigenous knowledge and environmental sustainability?
 - Using your own local community as a basis for reflection, are you aware of or do you personally experience issues in relation to water? How would you describe political representation in your part of the world?

Eco-feminism

What is 'eco-feminism'? The term 'eco-feminism' represents an amalgam of *ecology* and *feminism*. Using an eco-feminist perspective, the interconnections between gender oppression and environmental degradation are brought into focus. Eco-feminism is particularly useful to ecosocial work practice as it not only examines how patterns of oppression are exacerbated by environmental concerns; it also frames co-operative ways of working with individuals, groups, communities and organisations in response to matters of social, as well as environmental justice.

This section briefly outlines some of the key theorists of eco-feminism including Françoise d'Eaubonne, Rachel Carson, Karen Warren, Greta Gaard and Lori Gruen, and Vandana Shiva.

Françoise d'Eaubonne is often credited as the originator of the term eco-feminism in the mid-1970s. D'Eaubonne located the underlying cause of ecological destruction as patriarchy and she saw capitalism as a manifestation of the institution of patriarchy.

For more information on Françoise d'Eaubonne – listen to *Back to the Future: Françoise d'Eaubonne, Ecofeminism and Ecological Crisis*¹¹ (14 minutes, 39 seconds).

In *Silent Spring* (1962),¹² Rachel Carson, using eco-feminist language and concepts, raised concerns about the impacts of pesticide usage

and raised community awareness about these impacts both in her homeland (the United States of America) and globally. This consciousness-raising helped to mobilise grassroots social action, especially in relation to the pesticide DDT.

Exercise 5: Exploring the Views of Rachel Carson

The following, short archival video clip captures the essence of Rachel Carson's views and also offers an alternative view as a point of comparison -

[Rachel Carson CBS Reports](#)¹³ (1 minute, 14 seconds)

After watching the video, consider the following:

- Note the language used by the male presenter and compare it to the language used by Rachel Carson. How does the man's language reflect dominant patriarchal discourse?
- What does Rachel Carson say about humans in relation to the natural environment? How does this resonate with eco-feminism and contemporary ecosocial approaches?

Karen Warren (1996)¹⁴ used an ecofeminist perspective to highlight how the domination of nature is connected to the domination of women. Warren linked the subjugation of women and nature to Western patriarchy and its emphasis on domination, exploitation, colonialism and individual competition. She argued that patriarchal capitalism viewed the planet in a mechanistic way, seeing nature and resources as ripe for exploitation and there for the sole benefit of humans.

Greta Gaard and Lori Gruen (1993)¹⁵ explored how feminism and ecology are interlinked and how environmental theory could be improved through insights from feminism relating to structural disadvantage and oppression. They identified the following central issues to be addressed by eco-feminism:

- The uneven distribution of wealth globally;
- Overconsumption in the West;

- Pollution and environmental degradation – especially access to clean, reliable water;
- Deforestation;
- Food insecurity, and;
- Overpopulation.

Gaard and Gruen argued that it is not possible to address environmental degradation without also addressing social injustice. Further, they argued it was not possible to address women's oppression without addressing environmental degradation. They posited that patriarchal advantage comes at the expense of all others and that a worldview based on individualism, domination and hierarchy is destined to ultimately fail:

That these two worlds, the human and the natural, are inextricably interconnected, may seem so obvious that it's hard to imagine that they are usually addressed separately.... Eco-feminism is a feminist movement for global health... health cannot happen in the context of injustice... if we truly want to make a change, the oppressions of women and the earth can no longer be addressed in isolation (p. 236-248).¹⁵

For more from Greta Gaard, watch [Ecofeminism Now](#)¹⁶ (37 minutes, 33 seconds)

This video also includes content on Lori Gruen, Francois d'Eaubonne, Mary Daly, Rachel Carson, Vandana Shiva, Winona La Duke, Karen Warren and others.

Exercise 6: Exploring the views of Vandana Shiva

Vandana Shiva has, for many years, articulated a theory of earth democracy in which all living things are interconnected and inseparable from the natural environment as part of an ancient wisdom.¹⁷

She advocates for a world based on cooperation, collectivism and equity.

Watch the following short video to gain some understanding of Vandana Shiva's views:

[Vandana Shiva Interview about Ecofeminism](#)¹⁸ (3 minutes and 40 seconds).

In the video, Vandana Shiva outlines her eco-feminist standpoint and explores how women make up the majority of farmers yet are still relatively invisible. The video also touches on issues of food security. Vandana Shiva also describes her vision for a return to Mother Earth and a revalidation of equity, cooperation and justice.

- Listen to how the interviewer constructs women in agriculture and note Vandana Shiva's response. How does this exchange reflect the oppression and invisibility of women?
- How does the interviewer's notion of women needing to 'catch up' reflect dominant constructions of society, especially in relation to women and men? Are men being used as a standard reference point?
- Reflecting on yourself, what do you first think of when you hear the term 'farmer'?

Exercise 7: Engaging with Ecofeminism, Exploring Key Terms and Considering Intersections

The following video provides a simple and engaging overview of eco-feminism and it outlines how eco-feminism relates not only to gender oppression, but also to the marginalisation of other groups in society. It also articulates how hierarchical thinking (dualism) and patterns of domination and marginalisation have an impact on gender and the environment.

[Ecofeminism: A Global Crisis](#)¹⁹ (7 minutes 14 seconds)

- How do capitalism and patriarchy intersect with gender oppression and the environment?
- How is the 'Anthropocene' defined?
- What are some of the dominant relations between humans and nature in the Anthropocene? How does this relate to eco-feminism?
- Identify and discuss some of the intersecting impacts of gender oppression and environmental degradation.
- What is your reaction to the issue of 'fast fashion'? What could we do in response to this issue?

Exercise 8: Ecofeminism and Dominant Discourses

The following video-based learning activity provides a more in-depth exploration of gender, theory, environment and eco-feminism. In this video, Professor Nancy Tuana presents the central tenets of feminist philosophy in relation to climate change, discourses and practice. Professor Tuana also outlines the role of knowledge production and brings this into the domain of climate change.

[Nancy Tuana on Gender and Climate Change](#)²⁰ (7 minutes 54 seconds)

- Consider how 'vulnerability' is constructed – who is seen as vulnerable?
- What does Professor Tuana say about resilience and vulnerability?
- How does she describe the Anthropocene and ways of thinking about 'our' place in the world?

Ecofeminism and Holistic Ecosocial Work Practice

How can ecofeminism inform ecosocial work practice? Ecofeminism deconstructs gendered oppression and its central relationship to environmental degradation. Given this understanding, how can we use this theory to guide ecosocial work practice for an equitable, sustainable future? For example, can conventional social work be transformed by a 'love ethic'²¹ based on interconnectedness, non-violence, peace and shared power?

Eco-feminism takes a multisystem approach to understanding the interconnected forces oppressing women and the natural world. Likewise, actions to redress these injustices must be multisystemic to address the intersecting impacts of sexism, racism, classism, imperialism, and anthropocentrism. Principles to guide eco-feminism (and ecosocial work) practice include respect for difference, unity in diversity, co-operative approaches, collective action, consensus decision-making and dialogue.¹⁵ Ecosocial work practice should always be framed by gender and intersectionality if it is to be truly transformative. If we do not address patterns of privilege and advantage, entrenched patterns of oppression are likely to persist and our actions, no matter how well intentioned, will be superficial.

Exercise 9: The Love Ethic

Read Naomi Godden's journal article on the love ethic in social work to explore how this concept is defined and how it intersects with ecological concerns in social work - [The Love Ethic: A Radical Theory for Social Work Practice](#)²¹

- How is the love ethic defined and why is it relevant to the transformation of society, social work and ecosocial practice?
- What are some of the parallels between Naomi Godden's work and what you now know about eco-feminism?
- How could you (or how do you already) incorporate a love ethic into your work?

Foundations for Ecosocial Practice

[Petra Tschakert on Gender and Climate Change](#)²² (18 minutes)

This video presents a more nuanced version of 'gender' as well as how vulnerability and privilege are constructed. Some particularly powerful aspects of this resource include the description of how knowledge is produced, what counts as knowledge and evidence, and how this intersects with eco-feminism/ecosocial practice.

- Take note of how ‘vulnerability’ and ‘privilege’ are outlined in the context of inequality – what does she say about privilege and marginalisation?
- What are the 2 pitfalls identified in relation to gender? How does each pitfall impact on how we think about climate change?
- In what ways is feminist theory useful in relation to knowledge about climate change?
- What does she say about ‘embodied experiences’, ‘intersectionality’ and ‘multidimensional poverty’?
- Drawing on her description of ‘ground-based field work’, identify some strategies for action you could use in eco-social work practice.

Exercise 10: Case Study

Read the following online article describing community action taken by a group of women in Poland in response to deforestation:

[Polish law change unleashes 'massacre' of trees](#)²³



The group Polish Mothers on Tree Stumps breastfeed their babies on recently felled trees around Kraków to protest the law change. Photograph: Tomasz Wiech/*Polish Mothers on Tree Stumps - Polish law change unleashes 'massacre' of trees.*

In relation to the article on deforestation in Poland:

- What are your responses to the images contained in this article?
- In what ways could you say the images represent aspects of eco-feminism?
- Based on your own research, share another example of an environmental issue and/or eco-social activism.
- How could you draw from the work of Naomi Godden and/or Nancy Tuana and/or Petra Tschakert to conceptualise this activism?
- Are there any issues in your local area that could be addressed, in part, through community action? If so, what strategies might you employ to engage others to participate?

Summary notes:

This chapter has outlined how ecological issues are inextricably linked to global patterns of oppression and how gender oppression is a persistent issue, worldwide. Gendered impacts of environmental degradation and climate change were outlined and the central tenets of eco-feminism were explored. Eco-feminism was linked to ecosocial practice more broadly and learning activities were presented as a means to stimulate reflection and frame ecosocial approaches towards transformative change for a sustainable, equitable future.

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Chapter 6: SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation

The Role of Social Workers in Promoting Sustainable Waste Management in Developing Countries

By Nuwan Gunarathne

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Learning Outcomes:

1. Understand how social work connects with UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation).
2. Identify the actors involved in sustainable waste management in developing countries.
3. Discuss the challenges and the options for successfully managing waste.
4. Describe the role played by social workers in promoting sustainable waste management options in developing countries.

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Editors' Degrowth Critique Summary of SDGs By Meredith Powers & Michaela Rinkel

Please see the Overview Chapter of this [Volume 3](#) of the edited workbook series, *Social Work Promoting Community and Environmental Sustainability*, for a more complete discussion of the ecosocial worldview and the editors' degrowth critique on the growth model, sustainable development and the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

This summary is offered not as a critique of the authors' chapter, but as a prompt to consider the chapter content in light of a call to engage in practice **within and beyond** the SDG framework.

Social work practice is clearly connected to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). As partners with and leaders in many communities where the work related to the SDGs occurs, we must consider our role in promoting community and environmental sustainability, **within and beyond** the SDGs. While we need to be versed in the SDG language and concepts and involved in conversations and actions with global partners for the SDGs, we must maintain a critical eye on the limitations of this framework and help shift the conversation towards genuine solutions (i.e. which can be sustained in the long term). We maintain that this shift involves embracing an ecosocial worldview and taking a degrowth approach for transformational alternatives to sustainable development.

Despite the admirable idea to include sustainability (which originates in an ecosocial worldview) with development (which is based on an anthropocentric worldview) to create “sustainable development”, it merely created another model which ultimately is still situated in the anthropogenic, capitalist growth economic paradigm. This growth ideology keeps perpetuating the unsustainable and unjust byproducts of growth, which cannot lead to true sustainability as injustice is inherent in this model.

This volume of the workbook series is thus, an attempt to demonstrate to the profession our relevance to the SDGs, as well as to demonstrate to the world that social work is essential to the realization of sustainability, ***within and beyond*** the SDGs.

Within: What social work brings to the SDGs

Working to eradicate the injustices that stem from poverty, inequality, and oppression is at the core mission of social work and encompasses each of the 17 SDGs. For example, poverty and inequality impacts overall well-being, health, and civic participation, and oppression, affecting both people and planet. When we operate ***within*** the current framework of the SDGs, social work promotes solutions that impact multiple SDGs at once, such as universal social protection systems, fair and ethical employment practices, democratic participation, and sustainable natural resource management.

The social work profession’s unique perspectives and skill sets are sorely needed. These include our emphasis on social justice, empowerment, the strengths perspective, and the person in environment perspective (also known as people as place), along with the approach of using a systems framework. These social work perspectives help to make more evident the power dynamics that exist and highlight the ways they are changed as we work to alleviate injustices related to poverty, inequality, and oppression, often connected to environmental and ecological injustices. Working within the SDG framework which uses the “triple bottom line” of sustainable development (i.e., the advancement of people, profit, and planet) we

can help bring ecological justice to the forefront. However, with an ecosocial lens we can also move beyond sustainable development to shift the conversation and create truly sustainable solutions.

Beyond: Shifting to ecosocial worldview and degrowth

By embracing the ecosocial worldview we can shift the discussion and actions around the SDGs, taking a transformative approach that offers a critical understanding that the “triple bottom line” of sustainable development is not actually possible. Competition and scarcity undergird the growth ideology, where sustainable development is located, and in that model profit will always prevail over the aspirations of meeting the supposed competing needs of people and planet. Ultimately this framework will only serve to further perpetuate ecological injustices and power imbalances.

Degrowth involves localizing solutions and is not only about a shift in economic ideology, but in a revised society that lives cooperation, sharing the abundance, and reciprocity-based relationships among people and the planet. This revisioning necessitates identifying alternative measures of “success” which should not be wedded to mere economic gain. Within the growth ideology, our current indicators are flawed as they only measure limited aspects associated with economic growth and promote solutions which give preference to profit and primarily benefit those with power. Instead, we can adopt non-economically centered indicators of prosperity that are within the ecosocial worldview. These measures determine success within the context of the interdependent well-being of people and planet (e.g., time, relationships, health, etc.). By moving *beyond* sustainable development to degrowth as transformational alternatives, we can open up the opportunities for truly sustainable solutions.

Lesson:

Waste management has become a serious threat to the achievement of social and ecological justice, in developing countries in particular. The history of social work has long been associated with waste management. For instance, pioneering social workers such as Jane Addams was a Garbage Commissioner in Chicago.¹ With this long association with waste management, social work has now recognized the importance of environmental sustainability since the inequalities and unsustainable environments related to climate change and pollutants can largely influence people's health and well-being.² With the rise of living standards and consumerism, waste generation has become not only an acute environmental problem, but also a justice issue.³ The SDG 6 focuses on clean water and sanitation, aspects of global health and well-being that are impacted by waste management practices. Sustainable waste management is a serious environmental challenge in which social work can play an active role as it poses threats to the achievement of many of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)⁴ that countries aspire to achieve by 2030. While waste management is a global challenge, it is more serious in developing countries for a number of reasons. Such reasons include restricted funding for the municipal and local authorities, insufficient integration of various stakeholders of the waste chain, urbanization and growth of population, problems in waste storage and collection, unsupportive regulatory environments, lack of awareness and public entities still proving the role of service provider than being a regulator or contractor.⁵⁻⁶

A successful waste management system requires the engagement of every actor in the economy including citizens, authorities, corporations and regulators.⁶ This is where social workers practicing in developing countries can play an active role by promoting the integration of sustainable waste management into its practice and education in order to realize the SDGs on a global scale. In contributing to sustainable waste management, social workers can make several interventions at multiple practice levels (see Table 1).

Table 1: Intervention Strategies for Sustainable Waste Management

Levels of Practice	Processes	Examples of Strategies
Individual and group building: empowerment	Process by which individuals and groups learn how to perceive and empowered to act upon the contradictions in waste management systems	Assigning a village community to initiate beach conservation activities
Individual and group building: Conflict resolution	Process to direct efforts at reducing grievances and asymmetric power relationships in waste management	Acting as mediators between municipal councils and communities on a landfill site
Community building	Process through which communities respond more effectively to their needs through increased participation and social animation in managing waste	Engaging the communities in finding solutions for waste that is difficult to recycle through participatory peer-to-peer education
Institution building	Process of developing existing social institutions and establishing new institutions to respond to the needs of waste problems	Developing new organizations/social institutions to manage waste in a rural village
Nation building	Process of working with cultural, social and economic institutions within a nation for improved waste management	Fostering links between different national level waste management organizations to find collaborative solutions for the waste management problems

Region building	Process of working with cultural, social and economic institutions within a region for improved waste management	Building an institution that aims to find solutions for the waste management problems at the regional (inter-government) level
Global building	Process of working with cultural, social and economic institutions on a global scale for improved waste management	Developing global standards for waste management such as initiatives to achieve SDG 11 through proper municipal solid waste management

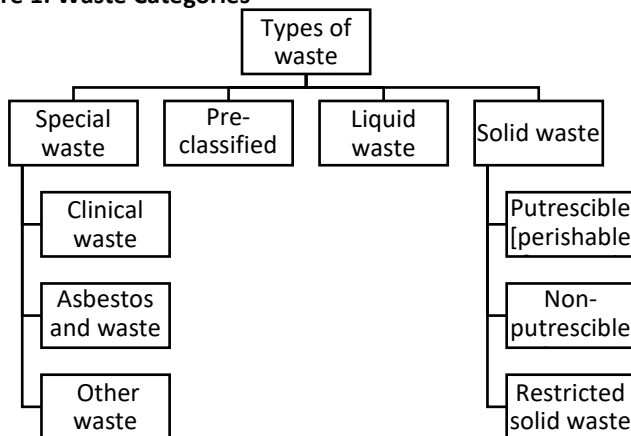
Source: Adapted from Estes⁷ and Gamble⁸

Before initiating any of the above interventions, it is necessary for social workers to gain a sound understanding of sustainable waste management. This chapter next discusses the different types of waste and waste management options available.

Types of Waste

For readers who are not familiar with waste management, the author recommends reading the references provided at the end of the chapter and viewing the five minute video: “Don't Waste Your Waste”, that explains the basics of sustainable waste management in animated form.⁹ If contributing to sustainable waste management, it is necessary for social workers to be able to identify the different types of waste because the appropriate treatment approach largely depends on the type of waste. There are various ways of categorizing waste. In most cases, waste categorization is determined by the national/local authorities and institutions. Despite slight variations, most of these categorization methods have common categories. For instance, New South Wales State in Australia uses the following waste categorization method (see Figure 1).¹⁰

Figure 1: Waste Categories



Source: Martin¹⁰

Waste Management Options

Waste management is the collection, transport, recovery and disposal of waste.¹¹ In managing waste, there are several options to deal with the various types of waste generated. These waste management options are: reduce, reuse, recycling (these three options are widely referred to as the 3Rs), other recovery methods and finally, landfill.^{12,13} The application of these various waste management options requires the engagement and active participation of various social actors. Due to the aforementioned barriers to sustainable waste management in developing countries social workers play an essential role.

Using landfills is the least desirable waste management option as it can have many adverse impacts on the environment and society.¹³⁻¹⁴ The most serious of these adverse impacts is the generation of methane, a gas which is 25 times more potent than carbon dioxide.¹² Built up methane in landfills can even explode posing threats to the surrounding communities. This represents an environmental injustice since these landfills negatively impact the health of the nearby communities. Energy recovery is the burning of waste in incineration

plants to produce energy and heat.^{13,15} Recycling is the reprocessing of waste, either into the same product or a different product.¹² Recycling enables the recovery of materials from waste that would otherwise end up in landfills. The recovery of materials reduces the need to extract virgin materials from the environment.¹⁶ Reuse involves the repeated use of the products or components for the same purpose or for another purpose.¹³ The reuse of products such as clothes and furniture has social, economic and environmental benefits. Prevention of the generation of waste, as the most desirable waste management option, becomes very important given the unprecedented growth of the population and scarcity of natural resources.

Application:

Instructions: Read the following two case studies, and then complete the exercises that follow. They may be done individually, in pairs or in small groups; modify as needed.

Case Study 1: Challenges of Managing Waste in Developing Countries

As discussed in the chapter, waste management has become a major challenge in many developing countries. Due to the improper management of waste, these countries have faced many environmental and social issues.

Please read the following:

- [Garbage Challenges in Developing Countries](#)¹⁷
- [Solid Waste Management in Developing Countries: Status, Perspectives and Capacity Building](#)⁵

Among the issues faced by these communities is the serious health and life threats posed to the communities living near landfill sites.¹⁸ The purpose of the following examples is to highlight the social and environmental repercussions of improper waste management in developing countries by focusing on avoidable disasters arising from the collapse of landfills.

Ghazipur landfill collapse in India

More than fifty metres high, the Ghazipur landfill in the capital city of Delhi, India collapsed in September 2017 after heavy rains. This landfill, that took the lives of two people when it collapsed, was supposed to be shut down more than fifteen years ago. However, due to the unavailability of a suitable facility to manage more than 10,000 tonnes of garbage generated by Delhi every day, dumping at this site continued until it collapsed.

Further readings

- [Ghazipur landfill collapse in Delhi was a tragedy waiting to happen](#)¹⁹
- [Ghazipur landfill collapse: Mere shifting of site won't end air pollution, diseases; scientific disposal only way out](#)²⁰

Meethotamulla landfill collapse in Sri Lanka

More than thirty metres high, the Meethotamulla landfill in the capital city of Colombo, Sri Lanka collapsed in April 2017 killing more than 25 people. After the collapse, the garbage engulfed more than 150 houses leaving many families displaced. For many years, the residents in the area had been protesting against garbage dumping in this site that caused widespread health, environmental and social problems. This landfill was to be shut down many years back, but due to the unavailability of a suitable mechanism and facility to manage the waste generated daily in the capital city of Colombo, dumping of garbage at this site continued for many years until this tragic incident happened.

Further readings

- [Massive rubbish mound collapse kills 16 people including four children in Sri Lanka](#)²¹
- [At least 26 dead in garbage dump collapse in Sri Lanka](#)²²

Exercise 1: Case Study 1 Discussion Questions

Imagine that you are a social worker assigned to work with the victims and local authorities of the Ghazipur and Meethotamulla landfill collapses, post-disaster.

1. Identify the environmental and social problems in the landfill sites in these urban areas of two developing countries.
2. Do you identify any similarities in the two incidents that took place in India and Sri Lanka? Discuss.
3. As a social worker how would you intervene to resolve the social and environmental problems of the residents affected by a landfill? Discuss your answer with reference to various social work options such as empowerment, community building and institutional building. ^{7,8}

Case Study 2: Waste Management System in Taiwan

Taiwan, once known as “Garbage Island”, today provides an impressive example of garbage management by recycling more than 55% of its waste. It is an exemplary story of how a country’s biggest problem has been converted into a thriving industry with the help of many stakeholders.

Rather than collecting garbage on a weekly basis, garbage trucks arrive several times per week blasting music. This music is a signal for people to bring colour coded garbage bags out to the street. In addition, in its capital city of Taipei, people use a digital app to track the location of the moving garbage trucks. There are volunteers and officials on the garbage truck to assist people in sorting their garbage correctly into recyclable bins/bags.

Taiwan uses an effective colour coded bin system that facilitates garbage collection, storage and treatment. For example, there are separate bins for raw food waste and for cooked food waste. While raw food waste is composted and used by farmers as fertilizer, the cooked food is used as food for animals such as pigs.

In order to maintain this system there are several effective mechanisms in place. All households have to buy government certified blue bags for disposing of non-recyclables, thus incentivizing reduction in the personal generation of waste. In addition, the Taiwanese government implements a strict fine system to punish offenders. Surveillance cameras are in place to monitor the offenders. First time offenders are warned, but if an offence is repeated, the video footage is posted publicly as an incentive to follow the rules. Moreover, offenders are charged fines. Sometimes, a part of the fine is offered to the citizens who report the incidents of violations.

Due to the successful implementation of this system for many years, the Taiwanese are now used to a “proper waste management culture” in which every citizen takes responsibility for managing their own waste. In addition, constant awareness programmes and other initiatives that encourage more responsible production and consumption patterns (as outlined in [SDG 12, Responsible Consumption and Production](#)²³) have reduced the per capita waste generation.

Not only has this system helped the government to reduce the problem of waste but it has also created a more liveable society, which is in line with [SDG 11, Sustainable Cities and Communities](#).²⁴ Furthermore, this system has given rise to a booming recycling industry that provides many employment opportunities while bringing in billions of dollars through the extraction and exportation of precious materials from waste.

Further readings

- [Taiwan has one of the world's most efficient recycling systems](#)²⁵
- [Taiwan Has Found A Brilliant Way To Get People To Recycle More](#)²⁶
- [Taiwan's Recycling Success: By the Numbers](#)²⁷

Exercise 2: Case Study 2 Discussion Questions

Imagine that you are a social worker assigned to work with the residents of Taipei, the capital of Taiwan.

1. Discuss the possible social, environmental and economic challenges of improper solid waste management, which Taiwan experienced before the implementation of the waste management system.
2. Describe the different types of municipal waste that can be generated in a country such as Taiwan and various waste management options available for its treatment.
3. Identify the key actors (or stakeholders) involved in Taiwan's waste management system.
4. Discuss the role of the aforementioned stakeholders in the successful implementation of waste management practices.
5. Describe the benefits for developing countries from a sustainable waste management system.
6. Discuss the role of social workers in sustaining a sustainable waste management system in a community.

Summary Notes:

The purpose of the chapter is to highlight how social workers can contribute to the achievement of environmental sustainability by specifically focusing on sustainable waste management. The two case studies provided in the chapter are organized around the last three learning objectives. The first case study highlights the challenges of waste management in developing countries by paying special attention to some of the recent tragedies that occurred as a result of improper waste management in India and Sri Lanka. The second case study shows how Taiwan, a country once plagued with waste now effectively manages waste. These two cases provide polar examples of unsustainable and sustainable waste management. While discussing the questions, the chapter aims to highlight the role of social work as a mechanism to establish and sustain a sustainable waste management system. For readers who are not familiar with waste management, the author recommends reading the references

provided in the chapter and viewing the five minute video: “[Don't Waste Your Waste](#)”, that explains the basics of sustainable waste management in animated form, produced for the Östergötland County Council in Sweden, for the "Waste To Energy" EU project.⁹

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Chapter 7: SDG 7: Affordable and Clean Energy

Hydraulic Fracturing and Indigenous Rights in the Heartland of the USA: Lessons for Environmental Social Workers

By Shane Brady, Amy Krings, and Jason Sawyer

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Learning Outcomes:

1. Define the concept of sustainable and clean energy in relation to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in general, and specifically to SDG 7: Affordable and Clean Energy.
2. Critically analyze the economic, social, and environmental tradeoffs associated with hydraulic fracturing.
3. Identify environmental justice issues in the reader's own community and consider how social workers currently promote sustainable community development in the area of clean energy, while identifying new opportunities for community-based collaborations.

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Editors' Degrowth Critique Summary of SDGs By Meredith Powers & Michaela Rinkel

Please see the Overview Chapter of this [Volume 3](#) of the edited workbook series, *Social Work Promoting Community and Environmental Sustainability*, for a more complete discussion of the ecosocial worldview and the editors' degrowth critique on the growth model, sustainable development and the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

This summary is offered not as a critique of the authors' chapter, but as a prompt to consider the chapter content in light of a call to engage in practice ***within and beyond*** the SDG framework.

Social work practice is clearly connected to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). As partners with and leaders in many communities where the work related to the SDGs occurs, we must consider our role in promoting community and environmental sustainability, ***within and beyond*** the SDGs. While we need to be well versed in the SDG language and concepts and involved in conversations and actions with global partners for the SDGs, we must maintain a critical eye on the limitations of this framework and help shift the conversation towards genuine solutions (i.e. which can be sustained in the long term). We maintain that this shift involves embracing an ecosocial worldview and taking a degrowth approach for transformational alternatives to sustainable development.

Despite the admirable idea to include sustainability (which originates in an ecosocial worldview) with development (which is based on an anthropocentric worldview) to create "sustainable development", it merely created another model which ultimately is still situated in the anthropogenic, capitalist growth economic paradigm. This growth ideology keeps perpetuating the unsustainable and unjust byproducts of growth, which cannot lead to true sustainability as injustice is inherent in this model.

This volume of the workbook series is thus, an attempt to demonstrate to the profession our relevance to the SDGs, as well as to demonstrate to the world that social work is essential to the realization of sustainability, ***within and beyond*** the SDGs.

Within: What social work brings to the SDGs

Working to eradicate the injustices that stem from poverty, inequality, and oppression is at the core mission of social work and encompasses each of the 17 SDGs. For example, poverty and inequality impacts overall well-being, health, and civic participation, and oppression, affecting both people and planet. When we operate

within the current framework of the SDGs, social work promotes solutions that impact multiple SDGs at once, such as universal social protection systems, fair and ethical employment practices, democratic participation, and sustainable natural resource management.

The social work profession's unique perspectives and skill sets are sorely needed. These include our emphasis on social justice, empowerment, the strengths perspective, and the person in environment perspective (also known as people as place), along with the approach of using a systems framework. These social work perspectives help to make more evident the power dynamics that exist and highlight the ways they are changed as we work to alleviate injustices related to poverty, inequality, and oppression, often connected to environmental and ecological injustices. Working within the SDG framework which uses the "triple bottom line" of sustainable development (i.e., the advancement of people, profit, and planet) we can help bring ecological justice to the forefront. However, with an ecosocial lens we can also move beyond sustainable development to shift the conversation and create truly sustainable solutions.

Beyond: Shifting to ecosocial worldview and degrowth

By embracing the ecosocial worldview we can shift the discussion and actions around the SDGs, taking a transformative approach that offers a critical understanding that the "triple bottom line" of sustainable development is not actually possible. Competition and scarcity undergird the growth ideology, where sustainable development is located, and in that model profit will always prevail over the aspirations of meeting the supposed competing needs of people and planet. Ultimately this framework will only serve to further perpetuate ecological injustices and power imbalances.

Degrowth involves localizing solutions and is not only about a shift in economic ideology, but in a revised society that lives cooperation, sharing the abundance, and reciprocity-based relationships among people and the planet. This revisioning necessitates identifying alternative measures of "success" which should not be wedded to

mere economic gain. Within the growth ideology, our current indicators are flawed as they only measure limited aspects associated with economic growth and promote solutions which give preference to profit and primarily benefit those with power. Instead, we can adopt non-economically centered indicators of prosperity that are within the ecosocial worldview. These measures determine success within the context of the interdependent well-being of people and planet (e.g., time, relationships, health, etc.). By moving **beyond** sustainable development to degrowth as transformational alternatives, we can open up the opportunities for truly sustainable solutions.

Lesson:

This lesson focuses on the United Nations [Sustainable Development Goal 7: Affordable and clean energy](#),¹ which aims to ensure affordable, reliable, and clean energy for all. However, to meet this goal, changes to national policies and equitable distribution of resources are needed. In the United States, for example, affordable and clean energy is not consistently available—particularly for people who are poor or living in rural or tribal lands. This disparity is striking, because many of the natural resources used to produce energy, including oil and natural gas, are extracted from areas that border these same communities. In this way, impacted areas become “sacrifice zones” in that they bear the environmental and health impacts associated with resource extraction, but enjoy limited benefits.²

Social workers, and the people with whom they interact, are important allies in efforts to promote environmental justice.^{3,4,5,6,7,8} Social work scholars examine impacts associated with environmental injustices, as well as campaigns to promote environmental justice, globally.^{9,10} Available research covers intersections of environmental justice and land rights and self-determination of Indigenous people,^{11, 12, 13} the provision of affordable, clean and safe water,^{14, 15, 16, 17} and the impacts of mining and resource extraction.^{18, 19} Yet, as the use of hydrofracturing is growing globally, less is known about if and how

social workers and the communities impacted by fracking are responding, and how local social and political structures constrain local influence.

Thus, in an effort to extend social work practice knowledge, this chapter begins by introducing the process of hydraulic fracturing (commonly referred to as “fracking”) as a contemporary example of an environmental injustice because it unfairly burdens low-income communities of color and excludes local participation in land-use decision-making. We then describe a case of an Indigenous tribe in Oklahoma, USA that used its collective power to assert its land rights while opposing nearby fracking. We conclude by challenging readers to identify practice principles that can inform their own efforts to advance environmental justice and clean energy production. Although the case study below is based on an authentic case, identities have been purposely de-identified as legal proceedings and actions are ongoing in these matters.

Hydraulic Fracturing and Environmental Justice in Heartland, USA

Hydraulic fracturing utilizes a variety of processes to locate and recover oil and natural gas from beneath the earth’s surface.²⁰ The practice of hydraulic fracturing is not unique to any one state or continent, and in fact is being utilized in petroleum production activities globally.²¹ The process of hydraulic fracturing begins with the construction of vertical wells that are dug thousands of feet into the ground. From there, liquids--typically comprised of wastewater and additive chemicals—are expelled at high-pressure levels to create fractures in the rock formations beneath the ground so as to allow for oil and natural gas to flow to the ground’s surface in order to be collected in large containers. The flow back water, which consists of the highly toxic and volatile chemicals from the fracturing process along with ground water and minerals from the earth, comes back up from the bottom of the vertical wells.²² This water can become quite dangerous when it flows into sources of drinking water and can have long-term impacts on the health and well-being of nearby residents.²²

The Economics and Politics of Hydraulic Fracturing

Debates over the ethics and impacts associated with hydraulic fracturing on the environment can be understood in light of long-standing debates about the acquisition of fossil fuels.²¹ Hydraulic fracturing stakeholders, including the oil and gas industry, argue that this method is well regulated.²¹ For example, the industry-based [American Petroleum Institute](#)²² contends that hydraulic fracturing is consistently reviewed and adjusted to mitigate its negative impact.²² ²³ In contrast, FracFocus, a voluntary non-partisan organization, argues that that the practice is far more harmful to the environment than the petroleum industry claims and all information related to the health and environmental hazards of hydraulic fracturing should be available to the public.^{24, 25} Thus, there is little agreement between advocates for and against hydraulic fracturing, and the points of contention between both sides are often complex.

Additionally, proponents of hydraulic fracturing argue that the economic gains associated with it outweigh any potential negative impacts.²¹ The oil and gas industry is an important contributor to many state and local economies throughout the Heartland of the United States, which includes Midwestern and Southern states.²⁶ According to the Oklahoma Energy Resources Board, a state agency, 20 percent of all jobs in the state are related to the oil and gas sector—although not all of these jobs are related to hydrofracturing specifically.²⁶ Additionally, the oil and gas industry brings in more than \$513 million dollars to the state of Oklahoma, and more than \$325 million to public education—crucial support for a state that ranks 49th in the nation for education.²⁷ Other states report similar statistics on the importance of the petroleum industry to the state economy, including the state of Texas, which generates \$180 million dollars in income as a result of oil and natural gas related jobs.²⁷

Divides also persist within the scientific community over the practice of hydraulic fracturing and the degree to which it impacts the environment.¹ For instance, in 2016, 567 earthquakes greater than a 3.0 magnitude were recorded in Oklahoma, the most of any state in the country.²⁸ This increase in seismic activity has been correlated to

increased levels of hydraulic fracturing throughout the state.²⁸ While it is difficult to unequivocally relate the impact of hydraulic fracturing to the increased seismic activity in the state, many residents and scientists alike, believe that hydraulic fracturing is to blame for the high number of earthquakes.²³ In addition to increased seismic activity, several states with high rates of hydraulic fracturing were found to have some of the most contaminated and poorest water quality in the U.S., alongside higher than average poverty rates within the country.^{29,30} Thus, despite pushback from the petroleum industry and other supporters of the petroleum and natural gas industries, most reputable research published outside these industries, indicates that hydraulic fracturing has negatively impacted water quality in many states that regularly engage in the practice.³¹

At the Intersection of Indigenous Rights and Environmental Justice

Recently, one Native American tribe pushed back against a major petroleum company for impacting their community as a result of hydraulic fracturing activities. In 2014, a large petroleum company bought the rights to drill for oil and natural gas in a rural area near land owned by the Native American tribe. The wells set up for drilling used hydraulic fracturing to find pockets of oil and natural gas that could be extracted for fossil fuel production. Although the wells were set up within five miles of tribal land, the petroleum company was not obligated to consult with the tribe to discuss safety protocols, community concerns, nor drilling efforts, because they were not technically drilling on tribal land.

Tribal members believed that their land rights would provide them with legal power to ensure that drilling did not impact their land, air, or waterways. Within a month of drilling, however, tribal community members began experiencing small tremors and also saw subtle changes to the river system that ran through their lands. These initial signs of trouble were brought to the attention of tribal leadership, and soon after, a much larger earthquake was felt by members of the tribal community. Upon experiencing the larger earthquake, tribal leaders began approaching the oil companies who were drilling in the

area for answers. Upon further investigation, tribal leaders were shocked to learn just how close the drilling was to their land, and they blamed the hydrofracturing for causing earthquakes and for polluting the river system. The tribe's people wanted to better understand the extent to which the hydraulic fracturing wells were impacting their land and waterways. For example, immediately after the earthquake, residents of the reservation reported a strong methane odor and witnessed streams of foul-smelling water trickling up from the ground in several places on and near reservation land. Additionally, the earthquake caused structural damage to homes, businesses, a local school, and the Indian Health Clinic, costing an estimated \$200,000 dollars to repair.

The tribal leaders called in representatives from their county's water and public works department to better understand what happened, and to figure out if they were in any kind of danger due to the proximate hydraulic fracturing. Representatives of the department replied that residents were in no immediate danger from the drilling practices. Tribal leaders remained skeptical and asked to speak to the management team for the petroleum company. Those requests were denied.

The tribe did not trust their county or state to protect them nor could they influence the petroleum company. Consequently, they sought out the support of a national environmental advocacy group. This group used a process known as street science^{31, 32} and sent out its own team to test the water quality in homes, groundwater reserves, and the nearby river. Their results concluded that the river water had higher than normal levels of methane compounds and the drinking water had increased levels of the same propellant chemicals used in the hydraulic fracturing process. Additionally, the river levels had already begun to drop slightly, which was attributed to the company's use of river water.

As a result of these findings, tribal leaders and advocates from the environmental advocacy group began organizing a campaign to stop

the petroleum company from drilling so close to tribal lands. While the petroleum company maintained that they were operating within the law and drilling on leased property, the tribe's stance focused on how hydraulic fracturing impacts more than just the immediate land that occupies the wells, but also groundwater supplies, which were connected to the river system that served as the major water source for the tribe. Several town hall style meetings were held on the reservation, home test kits were handed out to all reservation members so that they could monitor their water, and tribal leaders approached the towns closest to the reservation to inform them that they could also be impacted by the drilling.

Currently, the tribe advocates against the petroleum company's use of hydraulic fracturing in such close proximity to tribal land through legal proceedings and organizing efforts. However, the petroleum company has been able to tie up their legal case in the courts and has started its own campaign promoting the economic necessity of the oil and natural gas industry in the state—while continuing to engage in hydraulic fracturing.

Application:

Exercise 1. Discussion and Critical Thinking

Apply a Code of Social Work Ethics (e.g., the International Federation of Social Work Code of Ethics or one from your regional or national social work organization), to the hydraulic fracturing case presented above and consider the following:

1. Environmental justice requires equitable access to safe, clean environments as well as meaningful involvement of all people in the policy and development decisions that affect their environment (Bullard, 1996). In what ways is this case an example of environmental injustice? What changes in policy or the distribution of resources would be necessary to bring about environmental justice?
2. How should social workers (as individuals and as a profession) balance the economic and environmental needs

of people and communities? How should they weigh the well-being of marginalized groups such as Indigenous populations?

3. Considering the UN's sustainable development goal of affordable and sustainable energy (SDG 7), how might energy needs of communities be met without degrading the environment and/or marginalizing people? How are these challenges being addressed in your community, region, or nation?
4. What are some renewable, sustainable energy sources that could be helpful to communities with which you work? (See for example, The IFSW Climate Justice Program in the Latin America & the Caribbean Region: "The Renewable Energy and Empowerment of Quechua Women" (Buena Vista, Bolivia).

Exercise 2. Environmental Sustainability Analysis and Action Plan

Identify a community with which you are familiar (maybe your own or one with which you are connected). Analyze the accessibility and quality of energy sources within it. Consider using different types of data in your analysis such as: statistics on the utilization of different energy sources, what energy sources are accessible to what members of the community, community member perceptions of clean energy accessibility, and overall environmental quality indicators. From there, create an action plan to address an issue or concern that results from your analysis.

Questions to consider:

1. What has been done in the past to address the issue, if anything?
2. How do local energy sources impact the health, well-being, and social conditions within the community?
3. How can a community practitioner partner with residents to bring attention to the issue?

4. How might you learn from other communities that have successfully advanced clean energy initiatives to promote sustainable development? (Examples include their use of strategy, tactics, and recruitment.)

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Films and Documentary Resources

- [FrackNation \(2016\)](#) – Available on Netflix and YouTube
- [Fracking England \(2017\)](#) – Available on YouTube
- [Shale Cowboys – Fracking under Trump \(2017\)](#) – Available on YouTube
- [This Changes Everything Documentary](#) – Available on Website
- [Triple Divide \(2013\)](#) – Available on website
- [Tar Creek \(Oklahoma’s most polluted town\)](#) – Available on YouTube

Chapter 8: SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth

Sharing to Flourish: A Degrowth Approach to Provisioning for Prosperity

By Meredith C. F. Powers and Jef Peeters

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Learning Outcomes:

1. Explore Sustainable Development Goal 8 and its connections with social work.
2. Critique the limits of the growth economic ideology from a degrowth perspective.
3. Describe “commoning” as an alternative way forward for a flourishing society.

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Editors’ Degrowth Critique Summary of SDGs By Meredith Powers & Michaela Rinkel

Please see the Overview Chapter of this [Volume 3](#) of the edited workbook series, *Social Work Promoting Community and Environmental Sustainability*, for a more complete discussion of the ecosocial worldview and the editors’ degrowth critique on the growth model, sustainable development and the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

This summary is offered not as a critique of the authors’ chapter, but as a prompt to consider the chapter content in light of a call to engage in practice **within and beyond** the SDG framework.

Social work practice is clearly connected to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). As partners with and leaders in many communities where the work related to the SDGs occurs, we must consider our role in promoting community and environmental sustainability, **within and beyond** the SDGs. While we need to be well

versed in the SDG language and concepts and involved in conversations and actions with global partners for the SDGs, we must maintain a critical eye on the limitations of this framework and help shift the conversation towards genuine solutions (i.e. which can be sustained in the long term). We maintain that this shift involves embracing an ecosocial worldview and taking a degrowth approach for transformational alternatives to sustainable development.

Despite the admirable idea to include sustainability (which originates in an ecosocial worldview) with development (which is based on an anthropocentric worldview) to create “sustainable development”, it merely created another model which ultimately is still situated in the anthropogenic, capitalist growth economic paradigm. This growth ideology keeps perpetuating the unsustainable and unjust byproducts of growth, which cannot lead to true sustainability as injustice is inherent in this model.

This volume of the workbook series is thus, an attempt to demonstrate to the profession our relevance to the SDGs, as well as to demonstrate to the world that social work is essential to the realization of sustainability, *within and beyond* the SDGs.

Within: What social work brings to the SDGs

Working to eradicate the injustices that stem from poverty, inequality, and oppression is at the core mission of social work and encompasses each of the 17 SDGs. For example, poverty and inequality impacts overall well-being, health, and civic participation, and oppression, affecting both people and planet. When we operate *within* the current framework of the SDGs, social work promotes solutions that impact multiple SDGs at once, such as universal social protection systems, fair and ethical employment practices, democratic participation, and sustainable natural resource management.

The social work profession’s unique perspectives and skill sets are sorely needed. These include our emphasis on social justice, empowerment, the strengths perspective, and the person in

environment perspective (also known as people as place), along with the approach of using a systems framework. These social work perspectives help to make more evident the power dynamics that exist and highlight the ways they are changed as we work to alleviate injustices related to poverty, inequality, and oppression, often connected to environmental and ecological injustices. Working within the SDG framework which uses the “triple bottom line” of sustainable development (i.e., the advancement of people, profit, and planet) we can help bring ecological justice to the forefront. However, with an ecosocial lens we can also move beyond sustainable development to shift the conversation and create truly sustainable solutions.

Beyond: Shifting to ecosocial worldview and degrowth

By embracing the ecosocial worldview we can shift the discussion and actions around the SDGs, taking a transformative approach that offers a critical understanding that the “triple bottom line” of sustainable development is not actually possible. Competition and scarcity undergird the growth ideology, where sustainable development is located, and in that model profit will always prevail over the aspirations of meeting the supposed competing needs of people and planet. Ultimately this framework will only serve to further perpetuate ecological injustices and power imbalances.

Degrowth involves localizing solutions and is not only about a shift in economic ideology, but in a revised society that lives cooperation, sharing the abundance, and reciprocity-based relationships among people and the planet. This revisioning necessitates identifying alternative measures of “success” which should not be wedded to mere economic gain. Within the growth ideology, our current indicators are flawed as they only measure limited aspects associated with economic growth and promote solutions which give preference to profit and primarily benefit those with power. Instead, we can adopt non-economically centered indicators of prosperity that are within the ecosocial worldview. These measures determine success within the context of the interdependent well-being of people and planet (e.g., time, relationships, health, etc.). By moving **beyond** sustainable development to degrowth as transformational

alternatives, we can open up the opportunities for truly sustainable solutions.

Lesson:

[The Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development: Commitment to Action \(Global Agenda\)](#)¹ (2010-2020) lays out four interrelated themes to unite the global profession: promoting social and economic equalities, promoting the dignity and worth of all peoples, working toward environmental sustainability and strengthening recognition of the importance of human relationships. These are also pertinent to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This chapter will specifically focus on how these themes connect to [SDG 8](#)²: "Decent Work and Economic Growth" and how we can help move the conversations and actions beyond the SDGs.

Upon first glance, SDG 8 seems somewhat identical to the *Global Agenda* theme of "promoting social and economic equalities", however they are distinctly different in several ways. Primarily, the SDGs are situated in the growth ideology (for more on this see the overview chapter of this volume),³ while the social work profession challenges this with the commentary on the global definition of social work, noting that it 'does not subscribe to conventional wisdom that economic growth is a prerequisite for social development'.⁴

It is now well established by world renowned ecological economists that there are limits to growth.⁵ Growth, even if marketed as "sustainable development" will not enable us to achieve our mission of justice and well-being and ultimately it even perpetuates the very problems that we work so hard to eliminate.⁶ The growth ideology, touts scarcity and growth as the only way to meet the never-ceasing demands to meet our needs. However, this false belief in scarcity and the approach of growth/development to meet it has only served to create true scarcity for some, while perpetuating the myth of scarcity for others.⁷

From the dawn of the profession, promoting justice and well-being for all has been the primary mission of social work. However, mainstream social work began as a profession alongside the industrial revolution in anthropocentric, capitalist contexts which are extractive and exploitative. Because of this origin, social work in many parts of the world has been coupled with the growth economic model in practice, though not out of explicit intentionality. Thus, in this chapter we seek to move the profession beyond merely operating within the SDGs and look to shift the conversation to how social work can move beyond the growth ideology, to embrace an ecosocial worldview and engage in degrowth alternatives as radical social work practice.⁶

We are not proposing some additional mission for the profession, rather we are merely asserting that degrowth is an alternative lens that would allow us to advance the current Global Agenda and help shape the Next Global Agenda, without unwittingly perpetuating the very problems we seek to eliminate if situated within a growth economic ideology. In order to do so, we are promoting what Dr. Rory Truell, Secretary-General of the International Federation of Social Workers, calls for “a just economy ... founded on: human rights, fair pricing, international standards of labour, enforced corporate social responsibilities, capacity building for developing countries, agreed forms of dialogue underpinning supply and demand agreements – enabling all parties to participate, and share in benefits.”⁸ Each of the aspects of such a just economy are included in the degrowth approach. This chapter will look specifically at the concept and practice of “commoning” as one of the transformational solutions within the broader degrowth approach to achieve the aims of the *Global Agenda*.

Degrowth

Simply put, degrowth can be thought of as an alternative path for societal transformation than that of ‘sustainable development’. Degrowth is not one specific model, rather it is an approach that includes various models and ideas that is another way forward.⁹ Degrowth is situated in an *ecosocial* worldview that equally values and promotes ecological justice, meaning justice for all aspects of the

ecosystem, including non-humans and humans, both current and future generations.^{3,5} This is opposite to an *anthropocentric* worldview, where the ecosystem is not seen as a relational whole, rather broken into elements viewed as mere resources for human well-being. The ecosocial worldview also promotes the interconnected relationships and mutual well-being of all (i.e., ‘conviviality’);¹⁰ where well-being is more than just surviving, it is about flourishing and thriving; it is about meaning making, not just living. “Human activity and work in a degrowth imaginary are centred around care for other humans, sentient beings and their (our) habitats, and they serve the ‘unproductive’ expenditures through which we make meaning” (p. 117-118).¹⁰ Thus, the degrowth approach causes us to question not only the “way” (i.e., which economic model) we are doing things, but also the “why” we do things. For example, “Why do we need to keep growing/developing? To what end? Who does this benefit? Who and what does it ultimately hurt? “How do we measure ‘success’”? And, “how can we create a truly flourishing society now and for generations to come?” To that end, degrowth criticizes the ideological premise of capitalism that human needs are infinite, making scarcity the foundation of the economy. Instead, it starts from a logic of abundance.⁷ ‘By abundance I mean that there is always an excess of energy available over and above what is necessary for our reproduction and survival, not abundance for the satisfaction of unlimited wants and desires’ (p. 35).¹⁰ For practice, this leads to a promotion of the commons, which is explored more below.

Degrowth questions growth as the *economic growth ideology’s* touted ultimate goal for a flourishing economy as it critiques the measures of ‘success’ used within that ideology (e.g., Gross Domestic Product (GDP)). To better understand the economic growth ideology, see the description in the Overview Chapter to this volume³ and an article, “Degrowth as transformational alternatives as radical social work”.¹¹ Degrowth, thus moves us in the direction of separating, or decoupling, the idea of a healthy economy and healthy people and planet from the economic growth ideology.

A Degrowth Critique of Sustainable Development Goal 8

While we applaud the United Nations for their achievements of bringing international attention to the Sustainable Development Goals and for rallying support, resources and action by governments, non-governmental organization (NGOs), and private citizens around these shared goals, we feel it is still missing the mark with solving the underlying problems the world faces. Indeed, at times the work on the SDGs may appear to be achieving some success, though in other ways they continue to reinforce the very problems they aim to solve. This is because sustainable development is situated in the growth economic ideology. The intent of sustainable development is to keep developing/growing but do it “sustainably”. Sustainable development is supposedly concerned with making sure to simultaneously “balance” development within the dimensions of social, financial, and environmental, often called the “triple bottom line”. But, how can one balance disparate and competing goals? As noted in The International Council for Science, within the SDGs there are targets that are not only conflicting and competing, but some even cancel each other out as the work on one nullifies the work done on another, and in some cases exacerbate problems for other targets while “solving” one target.¹² In this chapter we focus primarily on SDG 8: “Decent Work and Economic Growth”, which denotes the positionality of the entire SDG framework as it literally has “economic growth” in its title.

[SDG 8](#)² aims to “promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.” Particular attention is placed on aid for trade, labor rights, increased employment for youth and those seeking jobs post-incarceration, gender equality in employment, anti-trafficking and anti-child labor laws. While these seem admirable and no social worker would argue against these, we are only critiquing the way the “problems” are defined and thus the approach through which the true solutions will come.

First of all, we disagree that a focus on economic growth - ‘7 % GDP growth per annum in the least developed countries’ (SDG 8.1) - is the

path to follow. Even if this growth may be a means to create prosperity, it is strange and illogical to see it formulated as a global goal.¹² Surely, in low developed countries there is a statistical correlation between GDP growth and the advance of welfare, as emphasized by the statistician [Hans Rosling](#).¹³ However, the results strongly depend on the policy pursued.¹⁴ And, since GDP only counts monetary flows, it does not account for the advances and setbacks (e.g. advance in welfare can be accompanied by environmental degradation). Or, in terms of goals, GDP as such is meaningless. That is why economist Kate Raworth urges dropping growth as a criterion for progress - being 'agnostic' about it - and focusing on achieving the social and ecological objectives themselves (imagined in her [donut model](#)).¹⁵ This focus on objectives means that some (economic) practices will shrink, while others will grow; what happens with the GDP is irrelevant.

Further, the focus on growth is translated in a search for 'higher levels of economic productivity' (SDG 8.2) and 'development-oriented policies that support productive activities [...] and encourage the formalization and growth of [...] enterprises' (SDG 8.3). These objectives implicitly confirm the idea that economy equals a market economy with companies as the main actors; in addition, they support a productivist vision of development.

We do not want to deny the importance of paying attention to markets, but we do want to emphasize that the economy covers a much more diverse domain of activities. It also includes the government initiative, the household economy and the multitude of citizen and community initiatives, including the commons.^{15,16}

This one-sided vision of the economy also influences the way in which labor is viewed, namely as contributing to the market economy - as 'employment' and therefore as a 'commodity'. Labor, however, covers a diverse field of activities whose meaning cannot be reduced to that. Labor is not a commodity.¹⁷ Care, for example, falls completely outside the focus of 'productive employment' of SDG 8. Thus, as Rory Truett notes, social workers can "call upon the EU and

individual countries to abandon austerity and free market approaches and urgently introduce new processes that bring the affected parties together to establish long-term and planned solutions, which enable people to live in coherent, stable and equitable environments, and sustainable economies".⁸ One such solution is 'commoning' as a way to flourish by provisioning through sharing.

'Commoning': Sharing to Flourish

In this chapter we therefore want to disconnect the path to a flourishing society - an alternative for 'development' - from the growth idea and focus our attention on practices that are in line with degrowth. These are practices that embody a different view on economics, and therefore also on work. This does not mean that we do not consider that efforts to improve the quality of current labor are necessary. After all, the transition to a new type of society does not happen from today to tomorrow. But from a focus on sustainability, it is necessary to think outside of the box. This starts with the recognition that any activity that results in products or services that meet the needs of people and takes care for other species and the earth creates value, thus has economic meaning.^{18, 19} But this meaning does not correspond to the criteria of the profit-driven market economy.

We state that to go in this direction, a radical democratization of the economy by embedding it in social life, is key. Therefore, people must start from where they are, come together, ask critical questions about the situation, and look what they can change. The book *Take Back the Economy* is constructed as a toolbox for people to struggle with current economic forms and practices. As such, it contains a lot of material that can also be used by social workers to guide people through this challenge. In it, J.K. Gibson-Graham calls a 'community economy', is this practice of people taking back the economy in their own hands, usually starting with some aspects of it, such as work, business, market, property or finance.^{20,21}

Where it is possible, people may try to create commons, self-organized social practices for meeting needs in fair, inclusive ways.

They are characterised by democratic decision making, co-operation and sharing, or 'decommodified' work. While degrowth is an open invitation to rethink society through the rejection of the dominant socio-economic paradigm, the commons already offer new ground based on real experiences. In doing so, they are in line with degrowth's premise of abundance: 'Commons tend to set forth a "logic of abundance, the proposition that there will be enough produced for all if we can develop an abundance of relationships, networks, and forms of co-operative governance' (p. 77).²²

Commons have a very wide variety of forms, from the classic natural resources commons (land, forests, water, fisheries) to the new knowledge commons of today (e.g. Wikipedia).^{22,24} Until recently, the focus of commons research was on their three constitutive elements - communities of commoners, management and use of collective resources, self-determined institutional forms and rules -, and on the conditions for stable commons.^{16,18} However, from the perspective of social movements and social change, there is a shift from the emphasis on institutions to commons as social practice, called 'commoning', a term introduced by the historian of the commons Peter Linebaugh: 'There is no commons without commoning' (p. 19).²² It goes without saying that this focus on commoning is interesting for social work.

In *Free, Fair and Alive*, David Bollier and Silke Helfrich²⁵ see commoning as a way to create a new life-form which arises *through* the people.

We can escape from capitalist value chains by creating value networks of mutual commitment. It is by changing the micropatterns of social life, on the ground, with each other, that we can begin to decolonize our-selves from the history and culture into which we were born. We can escape the sense of powerless isolation that defines so much of modern life. We can develop healthier, fair alternatives (p. 5).²⁵

Patterns of Commoning: Since commons may arise only through commoning, Bollier and Helfrich try to expose the foundations of

commoning on the basis of an analysis of numerous commons practices. To describe a new life-form, you need also a new language, since language has an important influence on the way we perceive reality. Therefore, Bollier and Helfrich pay a lot of attention to the language of commoning because the language of modern society and its views on economics do not allow us to adequately articulate the reality of the commons. The book also contains glossaries with both old and new terms.

The large diversity of commons does not allow to define commoning in general principles. However, underlying patterns of action can be distinguished, of which the authors describe twenty-eight. We cannot discuss them in detail but outline the main points to get a glimpse of this other world. The constitutive elements of the commons are seen as different perspectives on the same reality and translated into three interdependent aspects, the *Triad of Commoning: Social Life, Provisioning, and Peer Governance*. This triad encompasses the twenty-eight patterns Bollier and Helfrich identified and is 'based on the premise that commoning is primarily about creating and maintaining *relationships* — among people in small and big communities and networks, between humans and the nonhuman world, and between us and past and future generations' (p. 93).²⁵

The patterns that comprise the Social Life of Commoning are specific forms of cooperation, sharing, and ways that people relate to each other. These Patterns of Social Live include: Cultivate Shared Purpose and Values, Ritualize Togetherness, Contribute Freely, Practice Gentle Reciprocity, Trust Situated Knowing, Deepen Communion with Nature, Preserve Relationships in Addressing Conflicts, Reflect on Your Peer Governance. They constitute the core of any commons while also manifesting in the two other spheres, as expressed in the description of commoning in the glossary:

Commoning is the exploratory process by which people devise and enact situation-specific systems of Provisioning and Peer Governance as part of a larger process of unfolding our humanity. It occurs as ordinary people decide for

themselves how to identify and meet shared needs, manage common wealth, and get along with each other. As people draw upon their Situated Knowing in assessing their problems, they are empowered to show creative agency in developing solutions that seem fair and effective to them. They also learn to live with ambiguities and uncertainties, and to respect the mysteries of the human condition. Commoning is the only way to become a Commoner. The power of commoning is not limited to interpersonal relations in groups but extends to the organizing of larger society as well.' (p. 75)²⁵

Summarizing, Helfrich and Bollier say that 'a commons arises when the patterns of Social Life reach a sufficient density of practice, threshold of self-organization, and continuity to express themselves as a coherent social institution' (p. 102).²⁵

For the two other aspects of commoning, we adhere to the author's descriptions, beginning with *Provisioning*:

Meeting people's needs through a Commons is called *provisioning*. The term is an alternative to the word "production," which is inextricably associated with the neglect of the nonmarket spheres of family, community, and Care, and a focus on market prices, efficiency, the externalization of costs, and so on. The purpose of provisioning is to meet people's needs, whereas the purpose of production (whether capitalist or socialist) is to generate profits for those producing the goods and services, and by producing them. Provisioning through commons occurs everywhere, but they generate shared wealth using different ways of allocating and distributing it. A basic goal of provisioning is to reintegrate economic behaviors with the rest of one's life, including social well-being, ecological relationships, and ethical concerns (p. 87).²⁵

Patterns of provisioning through commons include: Make & Use Together; Support Care & Decommodified Work; Share the Risks of Provisioning; Use Convivial Tools; Rely on Distributed Structures; Creatively Adapt & Renew. They also include four *Modes of Contribution and Allocation*: Contribute & Share; Pool, Cap & Divide Up; Pool, Cap & Mutualize; Trade with Price Sovereignty.

Peer Governance is the last aspect of commoning that Bollier and Helfrich defined. People who are participating in commons are considered as peers, people who have equal social and political power in relation to other members of the group. 'Peers have different talents and personalities, but they see each other as having the same rights and capabilities to contribute to a collaborative project and to decide how it shall proceed.' (p. 85)²⁰ This idea of equality, also crucial for social work, is core to the way commons are managed.

Peer Governance is that part of Commoning by which people make decisions, set boundaries, enforce rules, and deal with conflicts — both within Commons and among different commons. In a peer-governed world, individuals see each other as Peers with the equal potential to participate in a collective process, not as adversaries competing to seize control of a central apparatus of power. Building on Elinor Ostrom's design principles, Peer Governance is a central concept because there is no Commoning and no Commonsense without Peer Governance, which is distinct from governing *for* the people and from governing *with* the people (Participation). It is governing *through* the people. (p. 85)²⁰

Important patterns of peer governance are: Bring Diversity into Shared Purpose; Honor Transparency in a Sphere of Trust; Share Knowledge Generously; Assure Consent in Decision Making; Peer Monitor & Apply Graduated Sanctions; Relationalize Property; Keep Commons & Commerce Distinct.

You can see this type of governance working in examples of water management commons, community land trusts, community currencies, care commons, Wikipedia, open seed banks, open source software and design, and so on. For inspiration you can find many examples of commoning in *Patterns of Commoning*.²⁴

Summary

Through commoning, we can achieve the interrelated aims of the Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development. We can embrace degrowth as transformational opportunities for radical social work and help shape the Next Global Agenda for Social Work, as well as shift the conversations and actions from the growth ideology of the UN SDGs. This shift is not just economic, but about embracing the ecosocial worldview within and beyond the profession.

Social workers are equipped with skillsets to help as we find ways to enhance relationships and create more meaning-making, rather than just income. Flourishing is about thriving, not merely surviving. It includes making a life worth living, not just sustaining life.

If we are to do this, then it necessitates we need to find ways to work less, share work, and re-imagine the "place of work" in our lives in the scope of the ecosocial worldview. We have to let go of our internalized belief of the theory of "scarcity" which only leads us further away from acknowledging the abundance that exists and leads, within the growth ideology to make unsustainable decisions which ultimately leads to real scarcity. Degrowth allows us to actually halt the destruction of the planet, renew, preserve, and sustain all life in the ecosystem, and create the conditions that make a life worth living.

Activities:

Exercise 1: Cultivating Patterns of Commoning

As noted in the chapter above, the patterns that comprise the Social Life of Commoning are specific forms of cooperation, sharing, and ways that people relate to each other. These Patterns of Social Live include: Cultivate Shared Purpose and Values, Ritualize Togetherness,

Contribute Freely, Practice Gentle Reciprocity, Trust Situated Knowing, Deepen Communion with Nature, Preserve Relationships in Addressing Conflicts, Reflect on Your Peer Governance. They constitute the core of any commons while also manifesting in the two other spheres. 'One could say that a commons arises when the patterns of Social Life reach a sufficient density of practice, threshold of self-organization, and continuity to express themselves as a coherent social institution' (p. 102).²⁵ For inspiration you can find many examples of commoning in *Patterns of Commoning*.²⁴ The text of the book, *Free, Fair, and Alive*, will become free to read chapter by chapter during 2019-20120 on the website: <https://www.freefairandalive.org/read-it/> Use the table below to make notes on ways you can cultivate such patterns in your own life and community. (Use additional space if necessary).

Patterns of the Social Life of Commoning	Ways you can cultivate such patterns:
Cultivate Shared Purpose and Values	
Ritualize Togetherness	
Contribute Freely	

Practice Gentle Reciprocity	
Trust Situated Knowing	
Deepen Communion with Nature	
Preserve Relationships in Addressing Conflicts	
Reflect on Your Peer Governance	

Exercise 2: Practicing a Degrowth Critique of the SDGs

In the above lesson, we critiqued SDG 8 through a lens of the degrowth approach. In this exercise, review the Sustainable Development Goals’ examples and actions and pick a few that seem interesting to you. Critique these from a degrowth lens. What alternatives could you suggest? Consider reading the *Pluriverse. A Post-Development Dictionary*. In the introduction Wolfgang Sachs gives an interesting historical overview of this discussion.²⁶

Exercise 3: Degrowth in Social Work Practice

The International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) has established a Climate Justice Program which involved a degrowth approach

through education, advocacy, and action that can help us reduce our harmful impacts, create policy changes, and contribute to climate justice projects around the world in order to redress our impact. Take a little time and explore the website for the [IFSW Climate Justice Program](#).²⁷ Consider:

1. **Educate:** What is something you learned on the [Educate](#)²⁸ page about ways you can make changes to shrink your own ecological footprint? Who could you share this with to help educate others?
2. **Advocate:** What are some ways you can advocate for policy or program changes in your own community, organization that approaches from a degrowth perspective? Consider a policy in an organization you are part of (personally or professionally). How could this policy be slightly adjusted, changed, or even replaced with a new policy that includes a degrowth perspective? For example, when your organization hosts an event, do they have a policy on purchasing locally sourced food, using eco-friendly products (like washable or compostable plates and utensils), etc. Or, for the travel policy, does your organization promote lowering the ecological footprint of those who travel by using virtual conferencing, carpooling, and lower impact vehicles? For examples of these, see the IFSW Climate Justice Program's [Advocate](#)²⁹ page.
3. **Be the Change:** You may want to contribute to the IFSW Climate Justice Program? Use the calculator on the [Contribute](#)³⁰ page for a suggested contribution based on your own travel. What ideas or resources could you share with the IFSW Climate Justice Program?

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Chapter 9: SDG 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure

Promoting Community and Environmental Sustainability through Responsible/Sustainable Tourism

By Daniela Duff

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Learning Outcomes:

1. Understand the link between social work values and responsible/sustainable tourism.
2. Identify how social work and tourism can increase awareness in social, cultural and natural environments.
3. Reflect on the benefits and challenges of the collaboration between community social work and responsible/sustainable tourism.

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**Editors' Degrowth Critique Summary of SDGs
By Meredith Powers & Michaela Rinkel**

Please see the Overview Chapter of this [Volume 3](#) of the edited workbook series, *Social Work Promoting Community and Environmental Sustainability*, for a more complete discussion of the ecosocial worldview and the editors' degrowth critique on the growth model, sustainable development and the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

This summary is offered not as a critique of the authors' chapter, but as a prompt to consider the chapter content in light of a call to engage in practice ***within and beyond*** the SDG framework.

Social work practice is clearly connected to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). As partners with and leaders in many communities where the work related to the SDGs occurs, we must consider our role in promoting community and environmental sustainability, ***within and beyond*** the SDGs. While we need to be well versed in the SDG language and concepts and involved in conversations and actions with global partners for the SDGs, we must maintain a critical eye on the limitations of this framework and help shift the conversation towards genuine solutions (i.e. which can be sustained in the long term). We maintain that this shift involves embracing an ecosocial worldview and taking a degrowth approach for transformational alternatives to sustainable development.

Despite the admirable idea to include sustainability (which originates in an ecosocial worldview) with development (which is based on an anthropocentric worldview) to create "sustainable development", it merely created another model which ultimately is still situated in the anthropogenic, capitalist growth economic paradigm. This growth ideology keeps perpetuating the unsustainable and unjust byproducts of growth, which cannot lead to true sustainability as injustice is inherent in this model.

This volume of the workbook series is thus, an attempt to demonstrate to the profession our relevance to the SDGs, as well as to demonstrate to the world that social work is essential to the realization of sustainability, *within and beyond* the SDGs.

Within: What social work brings to the SDGs

Working to eradicate the injustices that stem from poverty, inequality, and oppression is at the core mission of social work and encompasses each of the 17 SDGs. For example, poverty and inequality impacts overall well-being, health, and civic participation, and oppression, affecting both people and planet. When we operate *within* the current framework of the SDGs, social work promotes solutions that impact multiple SDGs at once, such as universal social protection systems, fair and ethical employment practices, democratic participation, and sustainable natural resource management.

The social work profession's unique perspectives and skill sets are sorely needed. These include our emphasis on social justice, empowerment, the strengths perspective, and the person in environment perspective (also known as people as place), along with the approach of using a systems framework. These social work perspectives help to make more evident the power dynamics that exist and highlight the ways they are changed as we work to alleviate injustices related to poverty, inequality, and oppression, often connected to environmental and ecological injustices. Working within the SDG framework which uses the "triple bottom line" of sustainable development (i.e., the advancement of people, profit, and planet) we can help bring ecological justice to the forefront. However, with an ecosocial lens we can also move beyond sustainable development to shift the conversation and create truly sustainable solutions.

Beyond: Shifting to ecosocial worldview and degrowth

By embracing the ecosocial worldview we can shift the discussion and actions around the SDGs, taking a transformative approach that offers a critical understanding that the "triple bottom line" of sustainable development is not actually possible. Competition and scarcity

undergird the growth ideology, where sustainable development is located, and in that model profit will always prevail over the aspirations of meeting the supposed competing needs of people and planet. Ultimately this framework will only serve to further perpetuate ecological injustices and power imbalances.

Degrowth involves localizing solutions and is not only about a shift in economic ideology, but in a revised society that lives cooperation, sharing the abundance, and reciprocity-based relationships among people and the planet. This revisioning necessitates identifying alternative measures of “success” which should not be wedded to mere economic gain. Within the growth ideology, our current indicators are flawed as they only measure limited aspects associated with economic growth and promote solutions which give preference to profit and primarily benefit those with power. Instead, we can adopt non-economically centered indicators of prosperity that are within the ecosocial worldview. These measures determine success within the context of the interdependent well-being of people and planet (e.g., time, relationships, health, etc.). By moving **beyond** sustainable development to degrowth as transformational alternatives, we can open up the opportunities for truly sustainable solutions.

Lesson:

The tourist sector is growing rapidly, especially in [emerging economies](#),¹ and tourism has become the most important source of income for many people. Tourism has the potential to contribute to all the [17 SDGs](#)² and is an important driver of development when it comes to employment opportunities and infrastructure. The [SDG 9](#)³ aims to “build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation”. Social work principles and values promote empowerment, as well as defending and securing the rights of the locals. Tourism, one of the largest industry sectors, has been used, at times, as a way to build economies and communities with little attention to inclusivity, innovation, and

sustainability. When the focus is simply on development, without attention to these factors, tourism can be a force that strips communities of resources, increasing inequalities. However, tourism can be a catalyst for community and environmental sustainability for a region and their people. The lesson in this chapter focuses on how tourism, which is embedded in a neighbourhood or a community, can make a difference in people's lives. When thinking of community sustainability I always remember my stay as a tourist in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, and my first visit at a particular restaurant: [Friends the Restaurant](#).⁴ This place was amazing, friendly, and served delicious food, while being simultaneously a social intervention for community sustainability. On the table, flyers informed me that this "training restaurant", in operation since 1994, and was established in order to "build the future of former street children and marginalized young people".⁴ The young waiter explained how, thanks to a social worker who had told him about this training program, he had applied for a job there and was given the opportunity for training in the restaurant and tourism industry. As a result, he was able to leave the streets and managed to live-independently, because he now had a career.

This brief example demonstrates how community development programs and tourism can meet successfully to create some aspects that contribute to sustainable communities. This example demonstrated how a social worker helped connect a vulnerable person to a comprehensive approach, which in turn changed his life and created a path for sustainable well-being. However, projects like this must also take into account the environmental sustainability such as recycling, eliminating single use plastic products, and selling products that are sourced from sustainable farms, and products that contribute to well-being (i.e., avoiding foods that contribute to obesity, hypertension).

As a practice based profession and an academic discipline, social work promotes social justice and supports social change, which gives people the opportunity to establish their lives with dignity and improved future prospects ([International Definition of Social Work](#)).⁵ One essential factor contributing to community sustainability and

well-being is a solid economic base, an income allowing people to organize their lives independent of social support interventions. [Sustainable tourism](#)⁶ (sometimes also called [responsible tourism](#))⁷ allows for community and environmental sustainability as it embraces values such as generating greater economic benefits for local people, improving working conditions and preserving natural resources. [Community based tourism](#)⁸ additionally embraces the element of empowering local residents to decide about their own touristic preferences and strategies. Sustainability is a multi-dimensional concept, increasingly used in social work to express our evolving understanding of the importance of consideration of well-being of both the natural and social environments. It is also a concept in responsible tourism. Most commonly, environment, economic and social dimensions are interlinked to shape sustainability and correspond with [United Nations' approach to sustainability](#).⁹

Communities and Sustainable Development

How is sustainability in communities understood? What factors make a community sustainable? How can social workers focus on environmental factors, as well as socio-cultural, and economic factors? Strengthening communities and empowering community members in creating their sociocultural, economic, and physical environments can be traced to the advent of social work as a formally recognized profession back in the nineteenth century, when pioneers in social work established the first settlement houses, such as [Chicago's Hull House](#).¹⁰ Between its early stages to its contemporary professional understanding, a [vast array of new approaches](#)¹¹ were developed in the field of social work, for example, group work and community organizing in the 1960s, Service Extension and New Economic approaches or Capacity Building in the 1980s and 1990s. The global financial crisis in 2008 led to austerity policies, which had impacts on many municipalities and made social work interventions more difficult. However, economic independence and access to main services for health and education allow people a decent life and the possibility of prosperity. Additionally, securing human rights is a crucial aspect of creating sustainable communities, and by addressing

injustice and inequality in the human context, the environment must always be considered, as well.

Social work that promotes community and environmental sustainability continues to recognize the importance of understanding power dynamics and the promotion of social (now expanded to include environmental) justice through its capacity to build-up communities, by incorporating structural and social change. This work calls for a multi-dimensional approach, which includes the ethical guidelines of the social work profession and follows the principles of sustainable community development (see examples in the list below). Usually, the notion of a sustainable community attends to factors like housing, transportation, health, and environment; and include principles of sustainable community development:

- [Government example: state of Massachusetts, USA](#)¹²
- [Greenstar-Communities in Australia](#)¹³
- [Sustainable Development Commission UK](#)¹⁴

Among the many definitions for sustainable development, the most frequently quoted, is the definition by the [Brundtland Commission](#):¹⁵ "Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." The modern concepts for sustainability, (e.g., the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals) are based primarily on the concepts in the Brundtland report.

Responsible/Sustainable Tourism

The UN-Organization for Education, Science and Culture, [UNESCO](#),¹⁶ defines sustainable tourism as "tourism that respects both local people and the traveller, cultural heritage and the environment"¹⁷ and the United Nations proclaimed the year 2017 as the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development. The tourism industry is one of the most important sectors for job creation. It is continuously growing and associated with increased diversification. As for sustainable tourism, there are several subgroups like *Eco-tourism*

(focus on environmental responsibility), *Geo-tourism* (focus on “place”) or *Voluntourism* (volunteering to support communities or organizations). *Community based tourism* is often implemented in rural, poor, and economically marginalized communities and aims at promoting participative work, while providing local residents with the opportunity to decide their own preferences and strategies for inviting tourists into their community (e.g. [Uluru, Australia](#)).¹⁸

All the various forms of responsible/sustainable tourism attempt to raise tourists’ awareness of the relationship of the local, indigenous people and their social, cultural and natural environments. Subsequently, some projects operate as a catalyst for positive change. They help to promote social sustainability through business practices while simultaneously boosting critical thinking and engagement among tourists. Therefore, responsible/sustainable tourism also engages in re-focusing and adapting to overall social and ecological issues, including those caused by tourism.

According to the World Tourism Organization ([UNWTO](#)),² 2017 was a record year with an estimated increase of 7% in terms of international tourism. This represents an ever-growing market of more than 1 billion international tourist arrivals each year, which directly affects the job market, and, thus, can be considered as an opportunity for sustainable development and contribution to poverty reduction. Additionally, responsible/ sustainable tourism can encourage solidarity, mutual understanding of other cultures, and protection of the local environment. However, a rapid growth in this sector may also create challenges despite the positive impacts. Worldwide, one out of ten people are involved in tourist activities, which represents the enormous economic weight, but also dependence on this sector. The increasing mobility of a growing middle-income class in emerging countries and the ongoing investment of tourist destinations led to serious consequences for some famous tourist sites: too many tourists are challenging the social, cultural and environmental situation and forcing municipalities to restrict access for tourists (e.g. [Barcelona](#),¹⁹ [Venice](#),²⁰ “[How mass tourism is destroying tourism](#)”).²¹

Security is required to make tourism possible. The consequences of political upheavals were particularly drastic in Mali, one of the poorest countries with a population of around 14 million, and one of the most popular destinations in West Africa, well-known for a lively music scene and the Bandiagara escarpment, listed as a UNESCO World Heritage site. Criminals from the Maghreb invaded the country, terrorising people, and kidnapping Westerners, and the tourism sector collapsed. Tourist guides lost their jobs, hotel managers had to lay off their staff, and the local vendors could no longer sell their goods. The Mali government lost one quarter of the targeted revenue in 2012.²² Thus, the security crisis in Mali created an economic crisis for individuals, especially those supporting large households and those dependent upon tourism. Government policies should guarantee the security of tourists in order to mitigate such crises.

In addition, governments need to also attend to the impact of climate change or environmental degradation, which may also affect tourist activities in some areas of the world (e.g. less snow for skiing in the Alps or bleaching of coral reefs where divers used to enjoy visiting). Similarly, policies need to be established through responsible/sustainable tourism that mitigate and reduce the negative effects of tourism on the environment, as there can be devastating impacts (e.g. excessive water consumption and wastewater/sewage, change of food supply systems as hotels and shops are set up in areas that were previously dedicated to agriculture). For example, these impacts can be seen in Ladakh Valley, in the Indian Himalaya. A region with a fragile ecological system, where locals were mainly involved in agriculture and husbandry. Depletion of water supplies was one of the harmful effects after the valley was opened for tourism in 1974. The waste management was also insufficient, and the effects of climate change became increasingly more visible and detrimental. As a result of these ecological changes, people were forced to leave their villages and the farming life to find other sources of income, often in the tourism sector. While Ladakhis began to work in the tourism sector, which

provided them the benefits of an income and options to send their children to school and pay for medical treatment, it also created undesirable changes in family structures and culture. These societal and ecological changes profoundly influenced their traditional way of life, which was uniquely adapted to the harsh conditions of this Himalaya region. Tourism in fragile ecological environments are particularly challenging. While the advantages of tourism on development must be taken into account, it is also necessary to be extremely sensitive and concerned about the ecological and social impacts of such development. Responsible/Sustainable tourism and the social work profession can share this responsibility and work towards a constructive cooperation in supporting the well-being of people and their environment.

Application:

Instructions: Read the following case study, and then complete the following exercises. The case study highlights a strategy to improve living conditions in a dense settlement with the community residents through responsible tourism. The exercises may be done in small working groups, in pairs and/or in a combination; modify as needed.

Case Study: Educational Tours of Impoverished Communities in Mumbai and Delhi

In India, the largest democratic country in the world with 29 states and a population of almost 1.35 billion (2018)²³, poverty is still a serious issue. As of 2017, It is reported that 21.9% of the total population lives in poverty.²⁴ Although~80% of the population still lives in rural areas, cities like Delhi experience many overpopulated city quarters. One of these areas is Sanjay Colony, a small, impoverished neighbourhood, also referred to as a “slum”, located in the south of Delhi. Since 2005, the socially responsible travel company, Reality Tours & Travels, employs locals to offer educational walking tours to visitors to show them a glimpse of how people live and work in a specific area. The founders, who started the company in Mumbai, with walking tours through Dharavi, faced a challenging start, tourists were not interested, and hotels did not want to advertise the tour. The breakthrough came when Lonely Planet

included the tour in their guidebook in 2007. This was also when Reality Tours & Travels decided to combine this touristic offer with the development of a community center, offering English and information and communication technology classes and community activities. To expand their social and educational projects in the area they set up the NGO, [Reality Gives](#).²⁵ The work with the community of Sanjay Colony, located in India's largest industrial area, started in 2014 with the same concept as in Mumbai and other places where Reality Tours & Travel had already expanded. Eighty percent of all the profit is reinvested to support the NGO, Reality Gives. The Reality Group reports a positive impact, and reaches over 6,000 local youth, welcomes over 15,000 guests/tourists each year and employs over 50 staff members. Currently they run educational and sport programs, train teachers and have built up several community centers.

Exercise 1: Responsible/Sustainable Tourism and Educational Tourism

1. How can educational tourism be responsible/sustainable tourism? Identify the criteria you would use when evaluating the impacts of educational tours. List and discuss some of the benefits and problems of educational tourism activities for communities?
2. How do the benefits you evaluate reflect the three dimensions (economic, social, environmental) of sustainable living and development? Consider the Global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
3. Are there critical limits concerning the impact on the communities? When does educational tourism harm members of a community? Try to take a critical lens and use [social work values](#)²⁶ (ethics) to evaluate this question.

Exercise 2: Changing the Narrative with Educational Tourism

1. What may be the image tourists have about India, and how may tourism perpetuate stereotypes and marginalization of deprived areas in India and the people who live in poverty?
2. How can guided tours to impoverished communities affect tourists' perception of those living there, and how might it

impact their future? (e.g., It may cause them to donate to social support programs or organizations working on environmental justice in these regions)

Exercise 3: Be Creative

1. Identify an educational tour in your own country. How would you evaluate that tour? Is it responsible/sustainable tourism?
2. Identify actions where social workers could address any problems related to tourism in your own community/country. Consider the criteria from [Global Sustainable Tourism Council](#),²⁷ as well as social work values. How could you, as a social worker, support your community in implementing these actions?

Exercise 4: Reflection

List your key messages you learned from this lesson and share them with your learning partners/group

Summary Notes:

Tourism is a fast-growing industry, a job creator and one of the most important economic factors in some regions of the world. Being more aware about the rising negative effects of mass tourism, responsible tourism may be a response to reduce the gap between the benefits and the threats of tourism.

You can find out more about responsible and sustainable tourism:

1. [UNESCO Teaching tool for sustainable tourism](#)¹⁷
2. [Global Sustainable Tourism Council](#)²⁷ developed Global Baseline Standards for the tourist industry

Pioneers like Jane Addams deeply influenced the idea about participation and (political) empowerment. Only people who can articulate their needs, wishes and arguments, have a chance to be heard (Alinsky, 1989;²⁸ Freire, 1971²⁹). For anyone who wants to know more about the Chicago Hull House and the first settlement houses, the following resources are helpful:

1. “The Hull-House Tradition and the Contemporary Social Worker: Was Jane Addams Really a Social Worker?” written by Brieland (1990).³⁰
2. [Website History of Social work](#)³¹

Social workers know how to empower people in taking part in decision-making processes, which affects more than their mere environment. Social work values, the underpinned theories, and the interdisciplinary approach of social work enables a constructive collaboration between social work and responsible/sustainable tourism.

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Chapter 10: SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities

Legacies of Colonisation and Contradictions of Global Environmental Governance

By Ai Sumihira

Ai Sumihira, MSW, is a registered social worker in Aotearoa New Zealand who works in public health sector. She is a lifelong climate activist. Ai reports that she has learned a lot from living through and working in a disaster recovery setting in the past, particularly from narrating with affected communities. Ai is passionate about making affected communities visible and their voices heard by building shared narratives with communities in climate change affected areas, including Asia and the South Pacific.

Learning Outcomes:

1. Discover ways that social work connects to SDG: 10~ Reduced Inequalities
2. Consider aspects of sustainability, empowerment, and respect within local and global social relief programs. and their impacts on inequality.
3. Apply the framework of the Global Agenda for Social Work and Sustainable Development to analyse aid projects in case studies.

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**Editors' Degrowth Critique Summary of SDGs
By Meredith Powers & Michaela Rinkel**

Please see the Overview Chapter of this [Volume 3](#) of the edited workbook series, *Social Work Promoting Community and Environmental Sustainability*, for a more complete discussion of the ecosocial worldview and the editors' degrowth critique on the growth model, sustainable development and the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

This summary is offered not as a critique of the authors' chapter, but as a prompt to consider the chapter content in light of a call to engage in practice ***within and beyond*** the SDG framework.

Social work practice is clearly connected to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). As partners with and leaders in many communities where the work related to the SDGs occurs, we must consider our role in promoting community and environmental sustainability, ***within and beyond*** the SDGs. While we need to be well versed in the SDG language and concepts and involved in conversations and actions with global partners for the SDGs, we must maintain a critical eye on the limitations of this framework and help shift the conversation towards genuine solutions (i.e. which can be sustained in the long term). We maintain that this shift involves embracing an ecosocial worldview and taking a degrowth approach for transformational alternatives to sustainable development.

Despite the admirable idea to include sustainability (which originates in an ecosocial worldview) with development (which is based on an anthropocentric worldview) to create "sustainable development", it merely created another model which ultimately is still situated in the anthropogenic, capitalist growth economic paradigm. This growth ideology keeps perpetuating the unsustainable and unjust byproducts of growth, which cannot lead to true sustainability as injustice is inherent in this model.

This volume of the workbook series is thus, an attempt to demonstrate to the profession our relevance to the SDGs, as well as to demonstrate to the world that social work is essential to the realization of sustainability, *within and beyond* the SDGs.

Within: What social work brings to the SDGs

Working to eradicate the injustices that stem from poverty, inequality, and oppression is at the core mission of social work and encompasses each of the 17 SDGs. For example, poverty and inequality impacts overall well-being, health, and civic participation, and oppression, affecting both people and planet. When we operate *within* the current framework of the SDGs, social work promotes solutions that impact multiple SDGs at once, such as universal social protection systems, fair and ethical employment practices, democratic participation, and sustainable natural resource management.

The social work profession's unique perspectives and skill sets are sorely needed. These include our emphasis on social justice, empowerment, the strengths perspective, and the person in environment perspective (also known as people as place), along with the approach of using a systems framework. These social work perspectives help to make more evident the power dynamics that exist and highlight the ways they are changed as we work to alleviate injustices related to poverty, inequality, and oppression, often connected to environmental and ecological injustices. Working within the SDG framework which uses the "triple bottom line" of sustainable development (i.e., the advancement of people, profit, and planet) we can help bring ecological justice to the forefront. However, with an ecosocial lens we can also move beyond sustainable development to shift the conversation and create truly sustainable solutions.

Beyond: Shifting to ecosocial worldview and degrowth

By embracing the ecosocial worldview we can shift the discussion and actions around the SDGs, taking a transformative approach that offers a critical understanding that the "triple bottom line" of sustainable development is not actually possible. Competition and scarcity

undergird the growth ideology, where sustainable development is located, and in that model profit will always prevail over the aspirations of meeting the supposed competing needs of people and planet. Ultimately this framework will only serve to further perpetuate ecological injustices and power imbalances.

Degrowth involves localizing solutions and is not only about a shift in economic ideology, but in a revised society that lives cooperation, sharing the abundance, and reciprocity-based relationships among people and the planet. This revisioning necessitates identifying alternative measures of “success” which should not be wedded to mere economic gain. Within the growth ideology, our current indicators are flawed as they only measure limited aspects associated with economic growth and promote solutions which give preference to profit and primarily benefit those with power. Instead, we can adopt non-economically centered indicators of prosperity that are within the ecosocial worldview. These measures determine success within the context of the interdependent well-being of people and planet (e.g., time, relationships, health, etc.). By moving *beyond* sustainable development to degrowth as transformational alternatives, we can open up the opportunities for truly sustainable solutions.

Lesson:

Causes of Climate Change and Inequalities

Climate change is essentially an issue of the planet becoming uninhabitable. Climate change will produce unfavourable effects, especially on the less affluent populations of the planet. One of the most concerning types of climate injustice is that the negative effects will be most severe on the communities which produce the least amount of carbon footprint. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change¹ (IPCC, 2007) asserted in its 4th report that the causality of climate change has a strong notion of anthropocentrism, meaning humans significantly contribute to climate change. It can be argued that wasteful resource management and the quest for economic

growth have contributed to an acceleration of climate change (Elliott, 2002).² In many cases, environmental deterioration is a direct result of capitalist economy and its consumer culture. The danger of consumerism was highlighted at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) conference in Rio De Janeiro in 1992. The discussions at the conference over 20 years ago already pointed out that consumerism, particularly in developed nations, would sequentially result in environmental adversities in the near future.³

Global leaders and supposed experts have attempted to manage the environment for some time, however it is questionable that the environment is something which should be managed by humans in the first place. Historically, many societies, especially those with anthropocentric worldviews such as many in the Western nations, began to view the environment as a commodity after the Industrial Revolution.⁴ The land, then became used merely as a tool to produce profit through production, for example, agriculture, forestry and mining. As a result, environmental management developed into a profession, which ultimately became just a money-making system.⁴ Furthermore, the severity of climate change did not get adequate attention until the quality of life in the affluent populations became threatened.⁵ Needless to say, progression of climate strategies through environmental management has had little or no emphasis on justice and human rights, rather an emphasis on economic gain.⁶

In 2017, 82% of all the economic growth was shared by the richest 1% in the world. The richest population group saw their wealth increased by 762 Billion US Dollars within a 12-month period. Let's put this into perspective, it would cost only 2.2 billion US Dollars to pay living wage for 2.5 million garment workers in Asia instead of paying them average wage.⁷ It has been predicted and observed that people who are already under oppression and marginalisation will receive the worst effect of climate change, and this tendency will only get worse as the climate crisis advances.⁸

At the same time, Cullity points out, disparities between rich and poor do not stem from scarcity of materials in the world.⁹ For example, research shows that there is enough food available for the entire population on this planet at present.⁹ At present moment, approximately one-third of the available food tends to be wasted/uneaten globally, and this is estimated as more than enough to feed the poorest people on the planet four times.⁸ Malnourishment and starvation in some areas occur due to power inequality and unfair distribution of materials.⁹ Power inequality and unfair distribution are present in climate discourses and strategies as well however, the presentation is not as apparent as expected. For example, some scholars critique that non-governmental organisation (NGO) projects or humanitarian aids can be used by Global North experts as a tool to control poorer communities in the Global South and contribute to colonisation. The following part of this chapter will illustrate some of the examples of such conundrums and contradictions which several environmental projects exhibit, sometimes unintentionally, sometimes purposefully. I will explore a local NGO's waste management project, which aims to reduce waste by distributing uneaten food to an underprivileged community. Another example is of a government-funded, humanitarian aid project was criticised for disempowering disaster affected communities.

Global Environmental Governance: Clean Development Mechanism and Global Carbon Market

In the 1980's, environmental governance became a mechanism of ecological modernisation, which in essence, aimed to conduct sustainable development, while making financial benefit out of it. Needless to say, ecological modernisation strongly stemmed from neo-liberal ideology⁶ and its focus was economic growth through, often unnecessary, developmental projects by the affluent for the less affluent.¹⁰

A key element of current environmental governance emerged out of the Kyoto Protocol during the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in 1992.^{6,11} Initially, Clean Development Mechanism suggested prohibiting developed nations from producing

carbon excessively. However, the Clean Development Mechanism was changed through greed via proposal from the US to use carbon offset to help development in the Global South.^{11,12} This means, under the Kyoto Protocol, when the affluent countries produce greenhouse gases over their target limits, those countries can buy opportunities to invest in developmental projects in less affluent nations which are aimed at sustainable development. The outcome of this agreement hasn't been as positive as expected. It has been reported that the local communities in the Global South often weren't consulted related to how they wanted to develop. An additional problem was that the development projects in the Global South (run by organisations in the Global North) were used to conceal the amount of carbon footprints that the developed nations were producing such as forestation projects.⁶

For decades now, the Clean Development Mechanism has been a tool that disempowers the Global South from their own agendas and fails to mitigate the main causes of climate change, namely the amount of greenhouse gases produced by the developed nations. As a result, the Clean Development Mechanism has been critiqued as a tool to promote capitalist economies of affluent nations and neglect the primary aim of protecting the environment. Some scholars call this phenomenon "carbon colonialism".^{6,11}

Case Study of LegaSea and Papatuanuku Kokiri Marae: Westernised environmental Management versus Maori Practice of Rahui (Conservation)

I recently got to know a not-for-profit organization in Auckland, named LegaSea. LegaSea is an organization which is concerned with the wellbeing of the oceans in relation to recreational fishing. LegaSea was established by and continues to be funded by New Zealand Sport Fishing Council, which aims to promote recreational fishing and contribute to the maintenance of fish available in the sea in Aotearoa New Zealand.¹³ In 2016, LegaSea launched a campaign, "Kai Ika" project in partnership with a local fishing club and the local marae (meeting house), namely Papatuanuku Koriki Marae. Kai Ika¹⁴ aims to reduce food waste in the community, and reports that only 30% of

whole fish are actually eaten by the recreational fishing consumers. The rest, heads, frames and offal are usually thrown out. The Kai Ika project gives out those “unwanted” fish parts to a community meeting house where those parts are valued, then those fish parts are further distributed to local families in South Auckland where Papatuanuku Kokiri Marae is located. While some parts are used as food, the offal is often used as fertilisers, such as in the community garden in Papatuanuku Kokiri Marae where marae staff and community members are growing a variety of vegetables. This project has been gaining popularity since its establishment and was nominated as a finalist for the New Zealand Initiative Business Award in 2018.¹⁴

Dominant Cultural Discourse

A number of climate scholars mention that the history of global environmental governance has been far too ethnocentric. Barnett and Campbell point out that the current picture of what climate change is, as well as the strategies to tackle climate change are, mostly, the projection of Western knowledge.¹⁵ For example, underrepresentation of scholars from the Global South in climate discourse is clearly evident.¹⁶ There is a predisposition that scholars from the Global North undervalue knowledge of Global South scholars. The importance of traditional knowledge shared by affected communities are often misinterpreted in research projects carried out by the Western scholars.^{6,15} The climate change affected communities, for example in the South Pacific, including Maori people in Aotearoa New Zealand, have lived in their environments for hundreds of years. In this example with the Kai Ika project, people in the local marae clearly demonstrated how to be resourceful by making the most of something that otherwise discarded as a waste by sport fishers. It seems to me that a key component which brought Kai Ika project success is indeed people in Papatuanuku Kokiri Marae who knew how to be resourceful. However, the strengths of the people in the marae was only recognised in a limited way in the local paper, ([Our Auckland](#))¹⁷ while LegaSea’s effort to coordinate with a fishing club to collect unwanted fish parts was recognised as worthy of an

award. While the fishing club is located in the affluent side of town, there was no mention about the expenditure on fossil fuels to go fishing or the pollution their boats would create in the water. The exemplar of Papatuanuku Koriri Marae and LegaSea clearly shows a tendency to overlook the resilience and knowledge of indigenous community.

There is a term, "*rahui*" in te reo Maori, which directly translate as "conservation" or "restricted access".¹⁸ *Rahui* is a traditional cultural practice which is used to conserve and restore the environment from being overused. If everyone in the world knew and adhered to the practice of *rahui*, there would probably be no need for an organisation like LegaSea to exist.

Case study of the Cook Islands: Humanitarian Aid as a Tool to Control

Local communities in the South Pacific are known for their rich, traditional ecological knowledge and ecosocial worldviews. The local traditional knowledge is thought to be developed by careful and loving observations and experiences of living on the land over generations for an extensive period of time. The local traditional knowledge includes, for example, techniques of securing food, preparing for cyclone seasons, and building social and environmentally resilient ways of life.¹⁹ I recently carried out a research project with Pacific Island communities in Auckland. I was truly struck by the richness of knowledge presented by participants, particularly the remarkable presentation of disaster risk reduction skills.

It has been reported that the richness of traditional knowledge is in danger of disappearing globally. There are a number of reasons for this, and some of the reasons are modernisation and urbanisation. On the other hand, some scholars, Adger et al,⁵ and Bäckstrand & Löövbrand⁶ blame it on overall environmental governance, while Johnston,¹⁹ Bankoff¹⁰ and Cullity⁹ identify external humanitarian aid as leading causes of vanishing traditional knowledge and culture amongst non-Western communities. The current trend of an

ethnocentric disposition of Western dominant climate strategies tends to degrade the close connection between “place” and people although, this sense of connection with land is common amongst the majority of communities which maintain holistic, ecosocial worldviews.⁵ Moreover, the Westernised climate governance model seems to divide the world in binaries, for example, developed and developing, aid donor and aid receiver, coloniser and colonised.^{6,10}

Disaster aid, often also called humanitarian aid, has become so prevalent and widely accepted as if it is a well-ordered and consistent practice of disaster relief and recovery, though it is only one strategy from one perspective. This type of aid work is often delivered by the affluent for the less affluent, not in a reciprocal relationship or through any participatory methods. Often, in the South Pacific, Aotearoa New Zealand and Australia send humanitarian aid to their island neighbours, typically after a substantial cyclone strike.

Johnston¹⁹ states in her study with rural Fijian communities that dependency and high expectations towards external aid are eroding local, traditional skills to reduce risks and to successfully live through environmental adversities. For examples, she witnessed that at local Fijian community was able to cope up to three weeks without external aid post cyclone. This was not merely showing their resilience when aid would not or could not come, but rather that they had their own strengths and capacity for coping as they had reduced risks and relied on traditional recovery plans.

New Zealand Aid Programme and the Cook Islands

Ahmed²⁰ demonstrates a loophole of an external aid project carried out in the Cook Islands after Cyclone Pat struck in 2010. Cook Islands have free association with Aotearoa New Zealand. Free association means that Cook Islanders are New Zealand citizens. New Zealand Aid Programme (NZ Aid) is a New Zealand governmental department under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. After Cyclone Pat hit the Cook Islands, NZ Aid performed housing projects, mainly in Aitutaki and Rarotonga. Some advantages of this housing project reported by the local communities were physical strengths of housing and

employment of local builders during the period of the project. At the same time, some of the shortcomings were also identified by the local communities. The building materials were imported all the way from New Zealand therefore, it made the project very expensive, as well as inconvenient for the local communities to repair the housing by themselves when needed. Also, the typical homes in the Cook Islands usually have the bathroom outside. Despite having bathrooms next to the kitchen being considered culturally inappropriate by the communities, the NZ Aid built homes had bathrooms inside, moreover next to the kitchen. This structure of housing made local residents feel uncomfortable to stay for a long term. Ahmed's²⁰ study reported that there were no consultations between NZ Aid and the local communities prior to the commencement of the housing project, therefore the local communities were not aware of the design. The local Cook Island communities reported further that they felt disempowered and excluded.

People in the Pacific Islands are resourceful and knowledgeable living in their land and capable of managing environmental adversity without relying on external help. However, aid has been used as a tool of control, making aid recipients to feel that they were powerless, despite the fact that they may have had more than enough capabilities to deal with difficulties that they were facing.⁹ Cullity⁹ critiques that humanitarian aid is sometimes carried out to cover up the donor countries' culpabilities, such as producing high carbon emissions. Indeed, there may be enough food and capability to tackle climate crisis on this planet if humanitarian aid wasn't used as a tool of control, but to truly empower the less affluent communities. It has been reported that Aotearoa New Zealand is the 5th highest emitter amongst the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development member nations. From climate justice perspective, the best way Aotearoa New Zealand can be of help for our Pacific Island neighbours may be through the vigorous effort to reduce our consumerism and emission.⁸

Application:

Exercise 1: Creating a Legacy of Sustainability

In this exercise you will reflect on several questions about that could help you shrink your ecological footprint and create a legacy that leads to sustainability.

First, consider the following questions posed in “The Sustainability Check” (this exercise was written by Ellis, Napan & O’Donoghue²¹ by adapting an exercise written by Strachan).²² This exercise asks you to pick an item in your home and consider answering the questions below:

1. What is it made of?
2. Where has it come from?
3. Who made it?
4. What need does it fulfil?
5. Is it necessary?
6. What will happen to it in the future?²²

Next, consider ways that you could decrease your ecological footprint if the item (and other items in your life) and embrace only items that are sustainable and just (e.g., made with renewable materials, made with a plan for recycling/composting, made with fair labour practices, etc.)

1. What is one item you have, or know about that fits this criterion?
2. What are the items you could replace and instead utilize sustainable and just items (e.g., a reusable shopping bag, a composting toilet)?
3. Discuss with a friend, colleague, or a family member, what how you can leave a legacy of sustainability. Look at the photos of [“Everything You Own In A Photo: A Look At Our Worldly Possessions”](#),²³ where examples of families around the world are photographed with all their stuff from inside the home brought outside and they pose for a photo with it. Consider what your belongings would look like.

4. When you move, or are gone from this world, what will you do with your items? Consider reading article, “Gift Wrapping Ourselves: The Final Gift Exchange”²⁴ for examples of what people nearing the end of life stages may do with their stuff.
5. You may also want to consider sustainable or “green burial” practices available, or work with your community to create such opportunities.

Exercise 2: Considering the Social Work Agenda with “Aid” Projects

Review the themes of the [Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development \(2010-2020\)](#).²⁵ Examine how these themes are exhibited in the above case studies. Then consider how they may be applied in your community. Use additional space if needed to complete your answered. Discuss these with a small group. Consider discussing your answers with the client/ service consumer populations you work with in your social work roles.

For example, exploring the theme of “Promoting the dignity and worth of peoples”, how have those “in need” of assistance, be it disaster relief or food, been viewed and “helped” in the case studies above? Are their perspectives and preferences valued?

1. Promoting social and economic equalities
 - a. “Kai Ika” project Aotearoa New Zealand
 - b. “Humanitarian Aid” in the Cook Islands
 - c. Example from your community
2. Promoting the dignity and worth of peoples
 - a. “Kai Ika” project Aotearoa New Zealand
 - b. “Humanitarian Aid” in the Cook Islands
 - c. Example from your community
3. Working towards environmental sustainability
 - a. “Kai Ika” project Aotearoa New Zealand
 - b. “Humanitarian Aid” in the Cook Islands
 - c. Example from your community
4. Strengthening recognition of the importance of human relationships

- a. “Kai Ika” project Aotearoa New Zealand
- b. “Humanitarian Aid” in the Cook Islands
- c. Example from your community

Summary Notes:

To tackle climate change, there are roughly two separate groups of actions suggested by international environmental governance. First is called mitigation which aims to reduce overall emission of greenhouse gases. The latter is called adaptation which aims to equip communities by building resilience within the community for the negative effects of climate change.²⁶ IPCC report in 2018 emphasised a special importance of mitigating CO₂ emissions. IPCC recommends human-made emissions to be reduced internationally by 45% by 2030, and to be net zero by 2050 to prevent global warming from becoming more than 1.5 C°. ²⁷ In essence, this means that the best thing that the affluent nations can do is to work on mitigating their own emissions with the best effort, instead of helping less affluent nations to develop further.

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Chapter 11: SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities

Bridging Environmental Policy with Welfare: A Task Proposal for Social Workers to Engage with Ecosystem Services

By *Pedro Gabriel Silva and Livia Madureira*

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Learning Outcomes:

1. Understand the connection of social work with SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities.
2. Describe Ecosystem Services and Payment for Ecosystem Services concepts as tools for fostering the sustainable development goals.
3. Recognize and build social work's capacity to bolster the outreach of environmental incentive programs.
4. Acknowledge the role of social workers in bridging environmental and social policy, discussing the intertwining of environmental measures, and welfare provision and well-being.

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Editors' Degrowth Critique Summary of SDGs By Meredith Powers & Michaela Rinkel

Please see the Overview Chapter of this [Volume 3](#) of the edited workbook series, *Social Work Promoting Community and Environmental Sustainability*, for a more complete discussion of the ecosocial worldview and the editors' degrowth critique on the growth model, sustainable development and the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

This summary is offered not as a critique of the authors' chapter, but as a prompt to consider the chapter content in light of a call to engage in practice **within and beyond** the SDG framework.

Social work practice is clearly connected to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). As partners with and leaders in many communities where the work related to the SDGs occurs, we must consider our role in promoting community and environmental sustainability, **within and beyond** the SDGs. While we need to be well versed in the SDG language and concepts and involved in conversations and actions with global partners for the SDGs, we must maintain a critical eye on the limitations of this framework and help shift the conversation towards genuine solutions (i.e. which can be sustained in the long term). We maintain that this shift involves embracing an ecosocial worldview and taking a degrowth approach for transformational alternatives to sustainable development.

Despite the admirable idea to include sustainability (which originates in an ecosocial worldview) with development (which is based on an anthropocentric worldview) to create “sustainable development”, it merely created another model which ultimately is still situated in the anthropogenic, capitalist growth economic paradigm. This growth ideology keeps perpetuating the unsustainable and unjust byproducts of growth, which cannot lead to true sustainability as injustice is inherent in this model.

This volume of the workbook series is thus, an attempt to demonstrate to the profession our relevance to the SDGs, as well as to demonstrate to the world that social work is essential to the realization of sustainability, **within and beyond** the SDGs.

Within: What social work brings to the SDGs

Working to eradicate the injustices that stem from poverty, inequality, and oppression is at the core mission of social work and encompasses each of the 17 SDGs. For example, poverty and inequality impacts overall well-being, health, and civic participation, and oppression, affecting both people and planet. When we operate **within** the current framework of the SDGs, social work promotes solutions that impact multiple SDGs at once, such as universal social protection systems, fair and ethical employment practices,

democratic participation, and sustainable natural resource management.

The social work profession's unique perspectives and skill sets are sorely needed. These include our emphasis on social justice, empowerment, the strengths perspective, and the person in environment perspective (also known as people as place), along with the approach of using a systems framework. These social work perspectives help to make more evident the power dynamics that exist and highlight the ways they are changed as we work to alleviate injustices related to poverty, inequality, and oppression, often connected to environmental and ecological injustices. Working within the SDG framework which uses the "triple bottom line" of sustainable development (i.e., the advancement of people, profit, and planet) we can help bring ecological justice to the forefront. However, with an ecosocial lens we can also move beyond sustainable development to shift the conversation and create truly sustainable solutions.

Beyond: Shifting to ecosocial worldview and degrowth

By embracing the ecosocial worldview we can shift the discussion and actions around the SDGs, taking a transformative approach that offers a critical understanding that the "triple bottom line" of sustainable development is not actually possible. Competition and scarcity undergird the growth ideology, where sustainable development is located, and in that model profit will always prevail over the aspirations of meeting the supposed competing needs of people and planet. Ultimately this framework will only serve to further perpetuate ecological injustices and power imbalances.

Degrowth involves localizing solutions and is not only about a shift in economic ideology, but in a revised society that lives cooperation, sharing the abundance, and reciprocity-based relationships among people and the planet. This revisioning necessitates identifying alternative measures of "success" which should not be wedded to mere economic gain. Within the growth ideology, our current indicators are flawed as they only measure limited aspects associated with economic growth and promote solutions which give preference

to profit and primarily benefit those with power. Instead, we can adopt non-economically centered indicators of prosperity that are within the ecosocial worldview. These measures determine success within the context of the interdependent well-being of people and planet (e.g., time, relationships, health, etc.). By moving *beyond* sustainable development to degrowth as transformational alternatives, we can open up the opportunities for truly sustainable solutions.

Lesson:

The following section clarifies the concepts of Ecosystem Services and Payments for Ecosystem Services, relating them to environmental protection, sustainability, well-being, welfare and the potential role of social workers, especially considering SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities. A case taken from a nature park in Portugal is used to explore such prospects as well as the restraints that limit a wider participation of social workers in the promotion and valorization of Ecosystem Services. Drawing from the introductory elements and from the case presented, readers are asked to complete a group exercise in four steps: 1) identifying an Ecosystem Services valorization program, 2) analyzing the program, 3) delivering a presentation, and 4) participating in a discussion.

Case Study: Portugal's Forest Fires

In June 2017, Portugal woke up with the breaking news of dozens of people who had died when caught by a devastating spree of forest fires - a final death toll of 64 would be noted later.¹ Forest fires were not novel to the southwestern most tip of Europe, in fact, wildfires have chronically charred Portugal during the summer in the last decades, bearing a huge impact on the environment and the economy, hitting especially hard rural territories, already subject of serious population decline. Later that year, in the middle of October, while still under severe drought and extraordinarily high temperatures, an unprecedented number of fires set the country ablaze, killing 45 more people within a 24-hour period. Throughout

the country, massive movements of solidarity sprang up and social workers from public services and NGOs came to the front of emergency relief efforts, deploying post-traumatic counseling and directing immediate aid, as well as delivering goods brought in from charity and national solidarity movements. Though the tragedy showed the capacity of social workers and public and private institutions to act in disaster relief, it also made clear that social work is still relatively removed from preventive planning and particularly distanced from the promotion of sustainable practices and environmental programs.

Social Work as Multidisciplinary Partner

The discussion that followed those catastrophic events brought to the wider public the concept of Ecosystem Services (ES) and the principle that the reduction of risk and prevention of future forest fires was related to the capacity to promote, value and compensate those who, locally, provide, maintain or contribute to keep the ecological balance and biodiversity. To enhance ES, a set of policy frames, measures and devices such as Payments for Ecosystem Services (PES) schemes are used, summoning a variety of experts from a wide range of disciplines (e.g., environmental engineering, law, agrarian engineering, sociology, economics, history), making the ES approach a truly transdisciplinary field.² Having said that, a question arises: Is there a role for social workers in the promotion of ES?

Indeed, we consider as an underlying premise that social workers can and should have a role in the provision and enhancement of ES. In order to do so, we must bolster the profession's capacity to engage with multidisciplinary teams working towards environmental protection, mitigation and/or prevention of environmental hazards, ecological restoration, and social well-being. Indeed, these roles fit well with the SDG 11 aims to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.

Ecosystem Services (ES) and Payments for Ecosystem Services (PES)

In short, ES refers to the benefits people receive from nature,³ or according to the TEEB report,⁴ they represent the direct, indirect or

passive benefits humans obtain from ecosystems that are fundamental to their well-being. According to the [Millennium Ecosystem Assessment](#),³ four main categories of services can be identified: (i) support (those that furnish the life-infrastructure on which the whole ecosystem and life depends); (ii) regulation (services that contribute to maintaining and regulating basic ecological functions such as erosion, water cycle, pollination, etc.); (iii) provisioning (services obtained from natural and semi-natural ecosystems that produce goods such as food, raw materials or water); and (iv) cultural services that allow leisure, artistic and sports activities.⁵ As we can see, ES imply the provision of a series of services which have a significant role in the promotion of the well-being, not just of those living in the areas where they are produced, but also of those who live in more distant places and benefit from them.⁶ As such, ES provision is connected to several SDGs, being SDG 11 - Sustainable Cities and Communities no exception. For instance, ES contribute to secure fresh-water supplies to the cities,^{7,8} to reduce carbon emissions and improve the air quality in urban areas,⁹ to preserve terrain stability, prevent soil erosion and landslides,¹⁰ to provide natural processes of waste management,¹¹ to allow access to leisure and sports activities in uncontaminated settings,¹² among many other examples.

Through biodiversity preservation and conservation, ES promote human well-being and its reach is not limited to those directly connected to its provision, but also to those who benefit from them. We should note that biodiversity is key to the functioning and provision of ecosystem services.¹³ Given our reliance on these services (such as water provision, clean air, fire or flood risk reduction, etc.), biodiversity ends up, directly or indirectly, relating to human well-being and human health.¹⁴ That is why ES are assumed to have a wide societal reach, namely tackling demographic decline and promoting environmental justice.¹⁵ Likewise, payments for these ecological services (PES) may represent an important instrument to improve the provision of ES and to foster a more balanced and inclusive distribution of incentives to diverse local stakeholders and

actors.¹⁶ Typically framed as market-based schemes, PES can vary in form and in principle, from direct financial incentives for the delivery of a service (e.g. forest cleaning or grazing) to indirect incentives through "eco-certification and charging entrance-fees to tourists" (p. 664).¹⁶ It should be noted that the interconnection of ES with market systems, financial globalization and the commodification of nature has been subject of critical appraisal, especially by the political ecology approach.^{17,18} PES can vary substantially depending on the property rights and who pays. Agri-environmental schemes, such as the one used by the European Union member states, is a type of public PES, where the providers (farmers and common grazing land owners) are compensated for their contribution to the provision of ecosystem services (fundamental to enhance the preservation of nature and biodiversity). For example, farmers can provide an ecosystem service through the preservation of nature if they use ploughing methods that limit the risk of soil erosion, if they grow forests using varied autochthonous tree species instead of monoculture, if they replace agrochemicals by alternative organic products that are much less prone to hurt the environment. However, the use of PES exceeds ecological conservation purposes, aiming, also, toward the pursuit of socio-cultural ends and food security, and, when tuned with welfare policies, they can also act as devices of social inclusion. For that reason, although PES schemes are not set primarily to address the needs of specifically deprived groups or to fight poverty, they can, nonetheless, contribute to fulfill those objectives. If we consider small farmers or Indigenous communities as possible beneficiaries of PES, these schemes may work as a combined instrument of social and environmental policy delivering additional pecuniary incentives to groups often facing harsh economic conditions and whose contribution as providers of ecological goods and ES is not always recognized. Accordingly, PES may support the role of local individual and institutional stakeholders as keepers of the land, acknowledging their stewardship of the territory and their agency in managing natural resources. An interesting exercise on the participation of local population in the management of natural resources can be seen in the activity proposed by Nhapi and

Mathende in the IFSW's first workbook *Promoting Community and Environmental Sustainability*.¹⁹

Considering the possibility that ecological imbalance disrupts social relations, hinders equal access to resources and generates social unrest, it is fair to think that, by retaining and promoting sustainable practices, PES could contribute to the attainment of environmental and social justice.²⁰ This is a non-negligible aspect, considering that "failing environmental quality disproportionately affects people more marginalized by the market economy" (p. 13).²¹ It is important to remember that the connection between poverty and the environmental crisis has been present in environmental social work literature in the last few decades.^{22,23,24,25,26,27,28,29,30,31}

The next section will present the implementation of a PES-like program in a protected area in Portugal. This case is representative of an agri-environmental scheme set to promote nature conservation and biodiversity, by supporting traditional environmentally-friendly practices and non-productive investments, like restoring old walls and other infrastructures that stood as part of the traditional agrarian landscape. The case serves the purpose of discussing how social work can contribute to bolster the overall effectiveness and reach of PES, thus bridging social and environmental policies and improving the multidisciplinary character of the ES approach.

Portugal Case Study

The case refers to the European Union co-funded agri-environmental schemes that member states implement through their own Rural Development Programs. The Integrated Territorial Interventions (ITI) approach has been followed by Portugal to implement this agri-environmental scheme between 2007 and 2014. Here, our focus is the Serra da Estrela Natural Park (SENP) ITI.³² Though it was not designed to serve as an instrument of PES, it ended up providing monetary incentives and technical consultancy to a variety of local providers of ES, such as the commons' associations, producers associations, and private landowners (whether or not devoted to farming and forest production). To adhere to the program, the beneficiaries would need

to comply with a tailored list of farming practices in light of biodiversity promotion and ecological conservation. The inventory of measures supported included, among others, activities such as the maintenance of pastureland, the safeguard of autochthonous forest trees, restoring old stone walls alongside rural and mountain paths, the preservation of riparian buffers, and the maintenance of traditional irrigation systems.³³ This program relied on a decentralized governance and technical apparatus, with the purpose of ensuring the management and monitoring of the measures more closely to local stakeholders and beneficiaries. That governance structure, called Local Backup Structure, joined organizations tightly connected to the agrarian sector and forestry, as well as local associations of producers, the representative of an environmental NGO and staff from the regional branch of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries. This local governance structure was more concerned with controlling the practices of beneficiaries and less committed to amplifying the reach of the program to a wider scope of recipients.⁵ Also, by failing to diversify the representation of local stakeholders, and not allowing other socio-professional actors and civic and administrative organizations to take part, and by maintaining a strict technical profile, this key local governance structure was not able to endorse a truly bottom-up participatory process.

Due to a series of frailties stemming from its top-down technical design and feeble reach, the SENP ITI program was not able to produce a wider socio-economic impact, in part, because it was unable to attract a larger number of beneficiaries besides the usual beneficiaries of agri-environmental incentives and other sorts of farming subsidies. In fact, a large number of individuals with less social capital and lower levels of literacy could have benefited from the program. Given the fact that the program contemplated the possibility of extending the incentives to non-productive investments, the potential recipients would not necessarily need to be those already involved in agricultural and forestry activities. Yet, the program was primarily, if not purposely, divulged to and within agricultural and forestry associations. For instance, the older,

smallholder peasants remained beyond the reach of the program. These, mostly retired people, altogether, own considerable areas of forest land and do not have the necessary financial means to secure its maintenance. One of the factors behind wildfire risk is the accumulation of combustible forest materials due to insufficient or nonexistent woodland cleaning/maintenance. Consequently, a wider involvement of these less affluent landowners (charted by the local social services) in the SENP ITI program could have contributed to reduce the wild fire risk as well as the possibility of increasing the economic benefits of the property (e.g. through the sale of biomass for energy production; through the sale of a variety of nuts and mushrooms).

This critical appraisal is not meant to discredit the implicit advantages of the ITI program, particularly its role in promoting ES, biodiversity and environmental sustainability. Nevertheless, it is reasonable to argue that, locally, the program fell short from achieving its full potential. Taking into account the already stated problems in reaching wider audiences, the ITI program in the SENP would have benefited from the insertion of other professionals in its technical structure or, at least, establishing partnerships with the practitioners that were operating in local and regional units, such as social workers. Arguably, the program would have profited from and achieved better results if social workers had taken part in it, whether at the top level, collaborating in the definition of some of the program's technical features, or working on matters related to governance design, particularly concerning its adjustment to local socio-institutional networks and pre-existing formal and informal partnerships. Also at the bottom level, social workers could have been summoned to participate in the program's implementation (e.g. integrating the local governance structure, cooperating in the communication and outreach plans, using their capacity as front-line practitioners and as social assistance services managers or as strategic planners in municipal and State services to divulge the program to specific audiences). In this sense, social workers could be valuable in articulating agri-environmental aids with other welfare measures, in

mediating conflicts and communication gaps between technical agents and beneficiaries and in accompanying the monitoring of the program in the field.

How can social workers play a part in the implementation of agri-environmental programs, such as the ITI? In Portugal, like in many other countries, social work professionals are assigned to work in all territorial levels: municipalities, in the central, regional and local Social Security branches, in third sector organizations, in inter-municipal associations and, in some cases, in sectoral associations, as well as in grass-roots initiatives and voluntary local development associations. In addition to that, social workers integrate inter-sectoral and inter-institutional structures and have quite a significant role in stimulating public-private partnerships and in organizing local networks of welfare services' agents. We should not belittle the fact that social workers hold a relevant set of professional competencies varying from front-line welfare provision, strategic planning and social intervention coordination to community organizing,^{34,35} without forgetting that they are also strongly connected to policy design and assessment. Indeed, environmental policy framing and execution can also count on the expertise of social workers, who, through their technical capacity and holistic understanding of social reality, might contribute to bridge environmental protection with wider social purposes. The case of the SENP ITI program evidences a universe of possibilities for social workers to contribute toward that bridging between environmental and social policy. Their participation would not have merely contributed to an improved dissemination of the program's measures, but also, and foremost, to foster its inherent connection to sustainable welfare provision. As mentioned above, a large set of potential beneficiaries are the less affluent, elderly, local landowners whose income is insufficient to care for their forest and agrarian properties, which in many cases are left abandoned and subject to aggravated risk of wildfire. For these groups, highly dependent on scarce social security benefits, programs such as the SENP ITI could become a viable extension to household income. On the other hand, because the program implies the disposal of services

(ploughing, forest cleaning and keeping, seeding and harvesting, small construction works, etc.) that need to be hired on site, seasonally or early, it opens opportunities for job creation, either on a permanent basis or as part-time for active individuals, such as those benefiting from State labor inclusion programs run locally.

Furthermore, by contributing to a wider enrollment in the program of social and capital-deprived beneficiaries, social workers could also contribute to promote the already mentioned environmental justice aims.

No social workers were involved in the ITI program. It is reasonable to ask what prevented social workers from taking part and why the entities responsible did not seek their involvement in any phase of the program's implementation. On its own, this case gives evidence of social work's difficulty to act outside mainstream professional endeavors and ordinary institutional service provision settings. Such circumstances undermine the possibility of social workers to broaden their scope of practice to contexts, projects and services outside mainstream roles, hence curtailing the opportunities for professionals to assume alternative and larger specters of practice as part of their legitimate professional identity.²⁷

In short, the case presented evidences a series of frailties concerning the local deployment of an agri-environmental program, stemming from a deficient non-participative governance scheme and insufficient social reach - shortcomings that could have been curtailed if the program had used a more diversified set of professionals, like social workers, placed within multiple levels of services provision and in close contact with the communities and stakeholders. With this case we hope to contribute to problematizing the non-participation of social workers and to invite students, educators and practitioners to discuss the non- recognition of social workers by State agri-environmental agencies as partakers of environmental programs and the apparent lack of social work's professional self-rendition to environmental policy planning and deployment.

Application:

Instructions: This exercise relies on group-work and implies at least two meetings, during which four tasks will be completed. The basic principle of the exercise is to identify cases that, like the one shown in the lesson above, might correspond to a Payment for Ecosystem Services scheme (PES). The cases will then be used to explore, analyze and discuss the participation of social workers - or their absence - in those particular devices of environmental policy.

Meeting Session One:**Exercise 1: Program Identification**

Groups are instructed to select a program that might correspond to a PES, an agri-environmental package or another kind of incentive frame deemed to work as a device to promote the delivery of Ecosystem Services in a determined area. The choice(s) are at the discretion of the participants and/or the leader. Active initiatives could be a reasonable choice as participants might have the chance to communicate with the staff of some of these programs (as proposed in the next exercises), though inactive programs might also constitute viable possibilities. Programs running in humanized protected areas³⁶ (areas that have been shaped by human intervention) may represent good options, given the inherent relation between environmental measures and the local social-cultural background, their potential complementarity to welfare devices, as well as the latent conflicts surrounding their implementation. Information concerning varied sorts of PES and programs alike from all over the world is available on the Internet from different institutional sources (e.g. environmental NGOs, foundations, national environmental agencies, United Nations, European Union, universities and research projects, etc. - for suggestions, see the resources section at the end of this chapter).

Exercise 2: Program Analysis

Once the program(s) is(are) identified, leaders and participants should define a set of variables or categories for which they will collect data (such data will constitute the feedstock of the discussion

that will be developed in the final exercise). Consider categories that heterogeneously respond to the program's key characteristics, fundamental to develop an analysis of the program's aims, coverage and prospective socio-economic impact. The listing could follow the data collection worksheet presented next. Note that the leaders and participants should build the data collection sheet considering the particularities of the program(s) and the territory(ies) at stake, subtracting or adding items to the list at their own will and in consideration of the available sources. Topics like the principles of implementation used to operate the program, or the prevailing types of property rights in the area, the existence of potential or known conflicts, among other issues, can be selected to frame a heterogeneous batch of qualitative and quantitative indicators, fundamental to develop an analysis of the program's aims, coverage and prospective socio-economic impact.

Data collection worksheet	
Program's Name	
Program's duration/historical context	
Program's objectives	
Territorial coverage	
Types of measures involved	
Recipients (or potential recipients)	
Budget	
Governance structure	
Partnerships involved (institutional and/or non institutional)	
Technical staff involved (interdisciplinary makeup)	

Consider a time lapse of several days between Tasks 2 and 3, so that participants can proceed with data mining and, eventually, acquire pertinent information through direct contact with the program's stakeholders. If feasible, considering the objectives of Exercise 4, participants could also try reaching social workers placed in different services in the territory/region asking whether they are knowledgeable about the program and about the eventuality of having professional ties with it. It might be advisable to take note of the current social workers' professional placement in that specific context or territory.

Meeting Session Two:

Exercise 3: Presentation

Based on the information collected and analyzed in the previous exercise, participants prepare a presentation of their case. In the presentation, participants should provide comprehensive insight into the program's potential social impact, pointing out the role social workers have or could have had in the program's design and implementation.

Exercise 4: Discussion

Following the group presentations, a discussion should take place on topics such as:

1. each program's probable social impact and potential to tackle imminent ecological risks (e.g., forest fires, drought, floods), to promote environmental justice, to alleviate socio-environmental conflicts and its ability to complement welfare provision;
2. the program's potential to bridge environmental and social policy;
3. general discussion about the participation of social workers in program design, implementation and assessment, evidencing the relevant knowledge and competencies to intervene;

4. critical reflection on the obstacles that may be limiting (within, as well as from the outside of the profession) the participation of social workers in environmental programs.

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Additional Resources:

Multimedia resources on ES and PES:

- California Academy of Sciences clear explanation of the ES concept and ES valuation: California Academy of Sciences. (2014, Apr 16). Ecosystem Services [Video file]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BCH1Gre3Mg0>
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The ITI agri-environmental program in the Peneda-Geres National Park, in Portugal (and its complementarity to welfare provision):

- Simbios. (n.d.). ITIS Peneda Geres: Participative Government [Video file]. Retrieved from <https://vimeo.com/100102801>

Information on the concept of PES and case studies:

- ES and PEs in the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment. (n.d.). Millennium ecosystem assessment. Retrieved from <https://www.millenniumassessment.org/en/index.html>

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- Porras, I., Barton, D.N., Miranda, M. and Chacón-Cascante, A. (2013). Learning from 20 years of Payments for Ecosystem Services in Costa Rica. International Institute for Environment and Development, London. Retrieved from <http://pubs.iied.org/16514IIED.html>

WWF's information on PES, biodiversity and conservation (instruments and methods):

- WWF. (n.d.). Payments for ecosystem services. Retrieved from http://wwf.panda.org/what_we_do/where_we_work/black_sea_basin/danube_carpathian/our_solutions/green_economy/pes/

International Institute for Environment and Development's information on PES and market integration:

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On the Serra da Estrela Natural Park ITI:

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FAO's information on PES and food security:

- Food and Agricultural Organization of the UN. (2011). Payments for ecosystem services and food security. Retrieved from <http://www.fao.org/docrep/014/i2100e/i2100e00.htm>

Information on the relation between ES, local development, market system, and poverty alleviation:

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Chapter 12: SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production

Innovation in Environmental Impact Assessments: Incorporating the ‘Signs of Safety’ Approach in Social Impact Assessments of Acid Mine Drainage in West Rand, South Africa

By Takudzwa Leonard Mathende, Tatenda Goodman Nhapi, and Lawrence Matenga

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Learning Outcomes:

1. Explore the connections of social work with Sustainable Development Goal 12: Responsible consumption and production.
2. Identify the socio- economic and environmental hazards and injustices of Acid Mine Drainage.

3. Understand the application of the “Signs of Safety” approach as a tool of assessing natural and social environments.
4. Describe the role of social workers as human rights promoters, guardians of environments and co-creators of sustainable communities.

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Editors’ Degrowth Critique Summary of SDGs By Meredith Powers & Michaela Rinkel

Please see the Overview Chapter of this [Volume 3](#) of the edited workbook series, *Social Work Promoting Community and Environmental Sustainability*, for a more complete discussion of the ecosocial worldview and the editors’ degrowth critique on the growth model, sustainable development and the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

This summary is offered not as a critique of the authors’ chapter, but as a prompt to consider the chapter content in light of a call to engage in practice **within and beyond** the SDG framework.

Social work practice is clearly connected to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). As partners with and leaders in many communities where the work related to the SDGs occurs, we must consider our role in promoting community and environmental sustainability, **within and beyond** the SDGs. While we need to be versed in the SDG language and concepts and involved in conversations and actions with global partners for the SDGs, we must

maintain a critical eye on the limitations of this framework and help shift the conversation towards genuine solutions (i.e. which can be sustained in the long term). We maintain that this shift involves embracing an ecosocial worldview and taking a degrowth approach for transformational alternatives to sustainable development.

Despite the admirable idea to include sustainability (which originates in an ecosocial worldview) with development (which is based on an anthropocentric worldview) to create “sustainable development”, it merely created another model which ultimately is still situated in the anthropogenic, capitalist growth economic paradigm. This growth ideology keeps perpetuating the unsustainable and unjust byproducts of growth, which cannot lead to true sustainability as injustice is inherent in this model.

This volume of the workbook series is thus, an attempt to demonstrate to the profession our relevance to the SDGs, as well as to demonstrate to the world that social work is essential to the realization of sustainability, ***within and beyond*** the SDGs.

Within: What social work brings to the SDGs

Working to eradicate the injustices that stem from poverty, inequality, and oppression is at the core mission of social work and encompasses each of the 17 SDGs. For example, poverty and inequality impacts overall well-being, health, and civic participation, and oppression, affecting both people and planet. When we operate ***within*** the current framework of the SDGs, social work promotes solutions that impact multiple SDGs at once, such as universal social protection systems, fair and ethical employment practices, democratic participation, and sustainable natural resource management.

The social work profession’s unique perspectives and skill sets are sorely needed. These include our emphasis on social justice, empowerment, the strengths perspective, and the person in environment perspective (also known as people as place), along with the approach of using a systems framework. These social work

perspectives help to make more evident the power dynamics that exist and highlight the ways they are changed as we work to alleviate injustices related to poverty, inequality, and oppression, often connected to environmental and ecological injustices. Working within the SDG framework which uses the “triple bottom line” of sustainable development (i.e., the advancement of people, profit, and planet) we can help bring ecological justice to the forefront. However, with an ecosocial lens we can also move beyond sustainable development to shift the conversation and create truly sustainable solutions.

Beyond: Shifting to ecosocial worldview and degrowth

By embracing the ecosocial worldview we can shift the discussion and actions around the SDGs, taking a transformative approach that offers a critical understanding that the “triple bottom line” of sustainable development is not actually possible. Competition and scarcity undergird the growth ideology, where sustainable development is located, and in that model profit will always prevail over the aspirations of meeting the supposed competing needs of people and planet. Ultimately this framework will only serve to further perpetuate ecological injustices and power imbalances.

Degrowth involves localizing solutions and is not only about a shift in economic ideology, but in a revisioned society that lives cooperation, sharing the abundance, and reciprocity-based relationships among people and the planet. This revisioning necessitates identifying alternative measures of “success” which should not be wedded to mere economic gain. Within the growth ideology, our current indicators are flawed as they only measure limited aspects associated with economic growth and promote solutions which give preference to profit and primarily benefit those with power. Instead, we can adopt non-economically centered indicators of prosperity that are within the ecosocial worldview. These measures determine success within the context of the interdependent well-being of people and planet (e.g., time, relationships, health, etc.). By moving **beyond** sustainable development to degrowth as transformational

alternatives, we can open up the opportunities for truly sustainable solutions.

Lesson:

Environmental issues are taking centre stage in local, national and global discourse as well as policies in a neo-liberal development context defined by unprecedented land grabs, increased militarization of natural resource use and governance, and privatization and/or commercialization of the environment.¹ In 2015, the United Nations adopted 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with ambitious targets to eliminate extreme poverty and hunger, take action on climate change, provide sustainable cities and communities with affordable, clean energy and infrastructure while also maintaining ecosystems and ensuring good health and well-being for all.² The SDG framework can be integrated into national and sectoral plans. SDG 12, responsible consumption and production, is concerned about the achievement of economic growth and sustainable development, but also advocates for reduction of [ecological footprints](#)³ by changing the way the production and consumption of goods and resources are done. This goal encourages industries, businesses and consumers to recycle and reduce waste and supports all countries to move towards more sustainable patterns of consumption and production by 2030.

SDG 12 is also focused on increasing sustainable business practices and increasing adherence to international norms of management of hazardous chemicals and waste. The efficient management of shared natural resources and the way toxic waste and pollutants are disposed are important targets to achieve SDG 12. For example, the South African government should have a strong national framework in conjunction with the overall SDGs, and specifically in regard to SDG 12, especially in concerning the gold mine industry. South Africa is well endowed with vast mineral resources, and the wealth created through mining, particularly gold mining, has funded the

development of the country. However, as the gold mining industry enters its twilight years we are now beginning to grasp the environmental damage, ecological injustices, and human rights violations that this industry has caused and will continue to cause in the decades to come.

The social, economic and ecological justice issues related to [acid mine drainage](#)⁴ (AMD) in South Africa, is a good example of work needed on SDG 12. Specifically, this chapter will explore the innovation of applying the “Signs of Safety” (SOS) approach of social work to Social Impact Assessments (SIA) of environmental management. When applied to SIA, SOS can act as a strategy to identify risks caused by Acid Mine Drainage (AMD) and contribute to action plans. The authors offer study findings and recommendations for adopting this innovation in SIA. Application exercises allow the reader to test out the application of SOS in SIA with various environmental issues.

Background: Sustainable Development and Social Work

The Sustainable Development Goals are based on [sustainable development](#),⁵ which adds environmental sustainability as a key aspect, interdependent with social development and economic development. Within the social development paradigm, these are viewed as interdependent within a broad, redistributive policies framework addressing poverty and economic inequality. As redistributive policies are potentially harmful to well-off groups, they will generally have an interest in minimising costs for social transfers and limit the extent of taxation, whereas the poor and low-income groups will have strong interests in benefiting from generous social transfers.⁶ The challenge of sustainable development, therefore, is to consider how to develop large projects in poor countries with rapidly expanding populations, while enhancing the livelihoods of local communities.⁷ According to Peeters (2012),⁸

Social work needs to explore the social dimension of sustainable development and ensure that it is incorporated into the public debate. Naturally, social work must continue to value the principles of social justice and stepping up the

effort for a more equal society is an integral part of the process of sustainable development.

Indeed, social workers have been and continue to address the social justice and ecological justice dimensions of sustainable development. In addition, social work's responsibility to help people with individual and social problems places a special responsibility on the social work profession to advance the cause of human rights and employ a [holistic "rights based framework"](#).⁹ This framework is about empowering people to know and claim their rights and increasing the ability and accountability of individuals and institutions who are responsible for respecting, protecting and fulfilling rights. This means giving people greater opportunities to participate in shaping the decisions that impact their human rights. A vibrant civil society plays a key role in achieving the progressive realisation of socio-economic rights, through both collaborative and adversarial means. Social workers recognize that restoring people's dignity and decision-making abilities, and informing them of their rights, is directly tied to increasing access to resources. These multi-focused approaches, on rights, access to resources, and increased decision making are fundamental in creating transformational and sustainable change that can eliminate poverty and boost people's confidence and their contributions to society.⁶

Case Study: Acid Mine Drainage in West Rand, South Africa

Context:

Africa contains about one-fifth of all known species of plants, mammals, and birds, as well as one-sixth of amphibians and reptiles. Biodiversity in Africa, which principally occurs outside formally conserved areas, is under threat from climate change, landscape development and other stresses. Savannahs, tropical forests, coral reef marine and freshwater habitats, wetlands and montane ecosystems of East Africa are all at risk.¹⁰ According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), Africa is experiencing the consequences of climate change.¹¹ Among these consequences are increased water stress, for example the crisis of

freshwater in Cape Town, South Africa, lower yields from rain-fed agriculture, increased food insecurity and malnutrition, a rise in sea levels and more land becoming arid and semi-arid. Thus, Southern Africa offers a compelling context from which to reflexively engage with the challenge of sustainable, ecological justice and well-being.¹²

Historical Overview of South African Gold Mining

Gold mining in South Africa began more than 120 years ago. When gold was discovered in 1886, in the middle of the semi-arid area known as the “Highveld”, there was a sharp increase in economic development with the formation of Johannesburg. Johannesburg’s growth was aided by diamonds from Kimberley, and later gold mining expanded east and west of the site of discovery. The first mining company to operate in the goldfield known as 'West Rand' was a company called the West Rand Consolidated^{13,14}

Krugersdorp town served as an administrative place for gold mining in West Rand, Randfontein town and informal townships of Mohlakeng, Toekomsrus, Bekkersdal were formed to accommodate the large workforces who were needed in the underground mining. The need for urban growth increased so much that several immigrant groups, such as the Mosotho, Batswana, Mozambicans, and Chinese, were brought in to fill labor gaps.¹⁵

Mining activities turned rural, underdeveloped areas into densely-populated regions and towns such as Randfontein, Westonaria and Carletonville and improved the infrastructure bringing roads, railway lines, water and electricity systems, schools, hospitals and supermarkets. Gold mines were observed to be indirectly or directly creating employment in the West Rand area. However, these mines were also impacting the social sector of the country negatively (along with the harmful ecological impacts, though ignored or unknown at the time). One of the major problems that was caused by mining is acid mine drainage (AMD).

[What is Acid Mine Drainage \(AMD\)?](#)⁴

AMD is metal-rich water formed from chemical reaction between water and rocks containing sulphur-bearing minerals. The runoff formed is usually acidic and frequently comes from areas where ore or coal mining activities have exposed rocks containing pyrite, a sulphur bearing mineral. AMD is also sometimes referred to as 'acid rock drainage' as metal-rich drainage can also occur in mineralized areas that have not been mined. AMD arises primarily when the mineral pyrite ('fool's gold' or iron disulphide) comes into contact with oxygenated water. The pyrite undergoes oxidation in a two-stage process, the first producing sulphuric acid and ferrous sulphate and the second, orange-red ferric hydroxide and more sulphuric acid.

AMD in South Africa

AMD effects include contamination of groundwater used for human consumption and agriculture. This problem has serious negative ecological impacts on major river systems located within the vicinity where gold mining was/is taking place. AMD has received considerable coverage in the media, of late, in the South African region and the number of short courses and workshops devoted to the topic has mushroomed. The City of Johannesburg's Disaster Management and Relief Forum has flagged AMD as a high risk. The current concern was prompted primarily through the decanting of contaminated water from the old gold mines in the Krugersdorp area into the '[Cradle of Humankind'\(COH\) watershed](#)'.¹⁶ Traces of AMD can be traced back to the 1880's. Although there was awareness of the issue at that time, there were not, nor are there currently, plans in place to deal with this toxic waste.

The West Rand townships of Mohlakeng, Toekomsrus, and Bekkersdal are the most affected areas with water contaminated with AMD due to the abandoned mines or spillage from the closed mines. The mining of certain minerals like gold, copper, and nickel is associated with AMD problems causing long-term impairment to waterways and biodiversity. In 2002, the water that reached the surface showed poor quality due to AMD.¹⁷ Present generations must seek solutions to this historical issue of AMD, an illustration of an

intergenerational or intragenerational environmental injustice problem,¹⁸ where subsequent generations must seek resolution to a historical issue. The South African government has had the AMD problem on its urgent agenda since 2009 and numerous stakeholders have emerged with varying solutions and concerns in addressing this threat.

Government realisation of the severity of AMD was noted by the former Minister of Water, Ms. Buyelwa Sonjica during the National Assembly speech vote on the 15th of April 2010 in which she stated,

There is a big problem of acid mine drainage in the Witwatersrand area which threatens our ground water resources and the very integrity of the environment and human survival. Even the famous Cradle of Humankind, a world heritage site, is under threat. We are currently engaged with short-term interventions to alleviate the worst effects, but the time has come for those responsible to account for their actions (Parliamentary Monitoring Group 2010).¹⁹

West Rand has many AMD dumps causing extensive soil and water pollution. AMD from gold mining in the Westrand has destroyed both water and soil systems. With ground and surface systems in South Africa interconnected, AMD has a potential to pollute a massive volume of water which poses a threat to major industries, which use large volumes of water. The mine water from this region currently passes through a decanting stream, known as Tweelopiesruit, which pours into the Indian Ocean.

Current Socio-economic Domains of Gauteng, West Rand

The [West Rand District Municipality](#) (WDRM)²⁰ is located on the south-western edge of Gauteng Province. (See Figure 1.1 for the locality of the West Rand within the Gauteng Province). The WRDM consists of four local municipalities namely Mogale City Local Municipality, Randfontein Local Municipality, Westonaria Local Municipality and Merafong City Local Municipality. A large portion of

the [‘Cradle of Humankind’ World Heritage Site](#)²¹ also falls within the boundaries of the WRDM, managed by the Cradle of Humankind Management Authority. The West Rand District is 4, 095 km² in size.²²

Gauteng is the driving force behind the South African economy and contributed 3.8% to the GDP in 2013. The economy of the province has diversified significantly since the early 1990s when it was dominated by activities in the mining and manufacturing sectors.²³ The West Rand Municipality Development Plan further notes that the economy of WRDM was previously characterised and driven by mining and mineral assets. The district, in fact, developed due to the presence of an extensive gold reef. The mines currently operating with the WRDM include Anglo Gold, Harmony Gold, Durban-Roodepoort Deep, Goldfields, JCI Limited, and Placer Dome – South Deep.

When developing a solution to the problem of AMD, it is important to understand all of the impacts that this pollutant has on the environment, as well as those dependent upon the environment. The authors assert that the use of the “Signs of Safety” (SOS) approach in the social impact assessment (SIA) process will help in identifying impacts, risks and strengths associated with mining activities. These tools are explained in the next sections, followed by the authors’ research findings on the application of SOS to SIA in AMD in West Rand, South Africa.

Social Impact Assessments (SIA)

SIA is conceptualised by Budge and Vanclay (1996)²⁴ as an advanced assessment process of estimating the social consequences that are likely to follow from specific policy actions or project development, particularly in the context of appropriate national, state, or provincial environmental policy legislation. SIA is an exercise conducted within environmental management and is anticipatory, futuristic and predictive, and less retrospective, in assessing planned development for social change.

Burdge and Vanclay further note SIA's emergence within the field of Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) was after the realisation that altering the environment of the natural ecosystem also altered the culture and social organisation of human population. The field of SIA grew out of a need to apply the sociology and other social sciences knowledge to predict the social effects of environmental alterations by development projects that were subject to National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) legislation in the USA. According to the Anthropological Survey of India (2011),²⁵ the World Bank, African Development Bank, International Monetary Fund and United Nations Development Programme, most of the multilateral and private agencies, including local commercial banks, now insist on prior SIA for projects that they finance.

The Constitution of South Africa (1996), National Environmental Management Act (NEMA) No. 107 (1998) and Water Act are landmark documents for South African EIA and SIA practice. EIA and SIA are not explicitly mentioned in the Constitution, but founded on the bill of rights in Chapter 2 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa where the right to human dignity, equity, equality and freedom are mentioned. These rights and the principles enshrined in the NEMA (Act 107 of 1998) have a bearing on the social and biophysical environment (ecosystem). One of the principles in NEMA (Act 107 of 1998) is that social, economic and environmental impacts of all activities including disadvantages and benefits, must be considered, assessed and evaluated and decisions must be appropriate in light of such consideration and assessment. SIA is centred on social care, which is domiciled within the ambits of social democracy, just like in social work practice. SIA and social work practice both share critical objectives of creating a caring and just society where all have a right to life, dignity and equity.

Mbigi (2014)²⁶ suggests participation action research discourse analysis, phenomenology, critical theory, cooperative enquiry, grounded theory, appreciative inquiry and critical rationalism are more dynamic methods of conducting SIA. Community participation in most cases is inhibited by lack of mobilisation skills on the part of

the implementing agency and this is coupled by arrogance among some of the officials who subsequently, negatively label those opposed to their development plans as enemies of development, agents of imperialists (Tanyanyiwa, 2016).²⁷

Signs of Safety (SOS)

Originally applied in the Global North among the child protection social work sector, the “Signs of Safety” (SOS) approach originated during the 1990’s by Andrew Turnell and Steve Edwards in Western Australia.

It [SOS] aims to work collaboratively and in partnership with families and children to conduct risk assessments and produce action plans for increasing safety and reducing risk and danger by focusing on strengths, resources and networks that the family have.²⁸

The SOS approach is now being used in at least 50 jurisdictions in 12 different countries across Australasia, North America and Europe. In 2011 the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) researched the SOS approach application in England and established that 35 local authorities mostly used SOS in child protection social work and its usefulness with neglect cases. SOS widespread use has generated much interest about further potential application in applied social research. Social Impact Assessments (SIA) is one such field of applied social sciences where this could be applied; the authors offer findings and recommendations from current research. The approach is based on the use of Strength Based interview techniques and draws upon techniques from Solution Focused Brief Therapy (SFBT). The authors contend that the application of SOS to SIA seems appropriate as they both focus on vulnerability and fragile environments.

Conceptual Framework for Signs of Safety (SOS) Principles

The SOS approach to assessment and planning theoretically and conceptually encompasses four principal domains of inquiry:

- Worries or Danger (What are we worried about? Past harm, future danger and complicating factors);
- Existing Strengths and Safety (What's working well?);
- Future Safety or Goals (What needs to happen?); and
- Judgement.

Each area of inquiry is further broken down into elements related to each domain and documented on a form. Past harm, future danger (also known as danger statements) and complicating factors are the elements explored on the danger side of the original form.²⁹ Existing strengths and safety are explored within the safety side of the original form. Within the SOS assessment process, the practitioner would gather and analyse the information from both of these sides of the danger/safety equation, to best inform the judgement that is recorded in the form of a safety scale continuum. Finally, under the domain of judgement, a context scale is used to assess the seriousness of the case under consideration in comparison to others the team or worker has had. The context scale ranges from “0 to 10” with “10” indicating there is enough safety for the child protection authorities to close the case and “0” indicating certainty that the child will be re-abused, and that the situation is so dangerous the child needs to be rehoused.

Innovation in Environmental Impact Assessments: Incorporating Signs of Safety into Social Impact

The authors contend that the SOS framework can be used in the SIA field to assess the risk and safety features of a problem, project, or situation. The domains of inquiry of SOS when applied to SIA would remain the same (i.e., *What are we worried about?*, *What is working well?*, *What needs to happen?*). The rating scale is a continuum, where “10” indicates “there are no or negligible risks” and a “0” indicates that communities are at “imminent risk and need relocation”, such that a Resettlement Action Plan and Social Management Plan would have to be put in place in the safety plan.

The research set out to explore an innovative approach combining concepts of SIA with those of wellbeing, drawing on conceptual

insights derived from SOS. The authors used qualitative approaches for assessing AMD in West Rand, including [Participatory Rural Appraisal](#)³⁰ (in the form of focus group discussions with affected and interested persons), and content and document analysis carefully selected relevant sources, thus yielding a thick description of the events and processes, as well as the effects of AMD in the West Rand. Since the AMD in the West Rand is a classic example of an intergenerational and intragenerational problem, trend analysis was also applied to understand the historical processes so as to be able to suggest and propose possible ways of solving the social problems emanating from AMD through using the SOS Approach. Table 1 presents the authors' results of this research.

Table 1: Findings from SOS Application to SIA in AMD in West Rand

Worries or Danger from past harms, future dangers and complicating factors (What are we worried about?)	Existing Strengths and Safety (What is working well?)	Future Safety or Goals (What needs to happen?)
<p>AMD threatens ground water sources which are used by communities Community involvement was very restricted in mining projects</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Mostly the mining closure leaves people impoverished and “ghost” or uninhabited towns present in the area <p>Unskilled personnel are left stranded as more skilled personnel are reabsorbed into other mining activities.</p> <p>People living close to the Tudor dam area of West Rand threatened with contaminated polluted water and affected soil.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Mining activities turned rural underdeveloped areas into densely-populated regions. · Gold mines were observed to be indirectly or directly creating employment in the West Rand area. · Mining activities create wealth for the country 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Robust accounting of actions by mining companies · By predicting the impacts it gives the mining corporations and communities closure plans which might be sustainable to the community and are cost effective to the company. · Open consultation with the community which helps identify problems of AMD on a timely

Westrand mines will be flooded with leaking acid water if government and mining corporations do not rehabilitate mines. The rivers will run dry and the groundwater will be unsafe for humans and animals consumption.

AMD will continue to flow uncontrollably from underground, entering the watercourse on the surface of West Rand. No preventative or remedial measures were put in place by the government.

West Rand communities will continue to be deprived of clean water in households due to the pressure from AMD pollution not immediately addressing AMD resulting in long-term health risk to residents in that region. Polluted Acid Mine Water may lead to cancer, decreased cognitive function appearance of skin lesions.³¹

One of the residents using borehole water indicated the water's "orange color" which could be suspected to sulphur compounds from AMD. We are worried that long term exposure of AMD can increase rates of cancer, decreased cognitive function, skin lesions, and low concentrations on pregnant women, neural problems and possible mental retardation.³²

We are worried that AMD affects the soil, which in turn affects West Rand farming and livelihoods due the pollution of the soil.

West Rand communities are exposed to health hazards as radon exhalation, radiation, dust and other tailings-related hazards from the old slimes

- Change in population dynamics

- Increase in employment and infrastructure development was historically contributed by the activities of the mines.

manner and helps to address the issue earlier.

- If mines can look for community ownership during mining closure processes, it gives the communities power to deal with problems, like AMD, as they will have been involved in the solutions and implementation of the closing process

- Sustainability is measured when a mine has managed a successful closure plan which does not involve community being affected by the AMD problems

- South African environmental laws need to set precautionary principles that stipulate that mining corporations that have polluted the environment will be made to pay for the harm caused.

- More extensive participatory action research is needed to determine health impacts of AMD on the communities living in the vicinity or close

dams. In the year 2006 *ad hoc* interviews by University of North West researchers for Carletonville residents where mining was still prevalent majority respondents identified mining related risks such as sinkholes and water pollution.

We are worried that unsustainability mining practices can threaten the water scarcity in Westrand since South Africa is a water scarce country
We are worried that AMD from abandoned mines could result in catastrophic ground and surface water pollution.¹⁹

AMD poses a short and long-term pollution threat.³³ The short term is viewed as in that the generation of AMD resulted in re-watering of underground works of disused mines. The long term is viewed within seepage of acid water into the water table from current and future waste dumps.

proximity of such mining activities.

Judgement: Rate this situation using the scale of “1” to “10” below. Compare your notes and scores to others in your group. If there are differences in the group, place the different numbers on the continuum, and discuss the reasons for the different interpretations of the case.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

“0” indicates that serious impact, communities are at “imminent risk and need relocation” (e.g., things are so bad for the community they can’t live in it).

“10” indicates “there are no or negligible risks” (e.g., and everyone knows the community is safe enough for the authorities to close the case)

Based on the evidence of social impacts presented above, the social and environmental risks could be ranked at 3 on the Signs of Safety scale. Though the risk is high, the communities are not at immediate or imminent risk of harm. The risk exists but it does not compel authorities to relocate residents. There appears to be no protective factors in this fragile environment.

Benefits of Incorporating Signs of Safety (SOS) into Mainstream Social Impact Assessments (SIA)

- The SOS approach in SIA processes can be used to empower and capacitate communities to keep the state of their environment under review
- By harmonising social and environmental assessment a bridge between science and policy informs and influences policy and decision making for affected communities safeguarding.
- SIA is regarded as a useful tool in the mining life cycle and should inform mines' operational activities as a management tool. During mining activities planning stages consideration of SIA whilst applying the SOS approach proactively mitigates potential negative impacts like AMD and eliminate social problems associated with AMD impacts.

Summary:

Humans all over the planet are struggling and aspiring to engage with the scale and scope of the challenge of achieving human well-being and environmental stewardship for all.¹² South Africa, in particular, is a water scarce country and its scarcity is further threatened by unsustainability mining practices which are evident in the West Rand region. AMD from abandoned mines could “result in catastrophic ground and surface water pollution”.¹⁹ South African technocrats in government frontline positions in extractive sectors must collaborate in addressing AMD by facilitating alternative water sources for the affected communities as continual polluted water usage by residents causes significant health problems. Additionally, social workers in

South Africa, along with coordinated advocacy groups, should initiate more robust applied action research, such as using SOS with SIA in AMD. This would better capacitate West Rand grassroots communities with knowledge to approach state and non-state duty bearers for legal recourse against AMD effects.

Harmonising the SOS approach with Social Impact Assessments SIA is an innovative method for social workers and social planners, alike. This combined tool can help planners, business, individuals and communities to mitigate some of the problems with environmental problems and promote sustainable production and consumption (SDG 12). Utilising SOS with SIA can also serve as a synergy in facilitating inter-relationships between mining corporations and communities, as these tools assist with inclusion and mobilisation of communities and enable the more accurate capture the views of those affected by development.

South African Legislative frameworks like NEMA and the National Water Act (NWA) stipulate that a party responsible for a mining operation must take all reasonable measures to prevent pollution or degradation from taking place. Policy provides enabling framework for development and implementation of legislation in an integrated, harmonious manner, while underpinned by more specific varying from country to country depending on the prevailing and historic circumstances, socio-economic development, and bio-physical environment.³⁴ Utilizing SOS with SIA, pathways are proposed for usage by policy makers, government technocrats and frontline social development practitioners to safeguard biodiversity in natural resources extraction and promote social and economic livelihoods. The government can fully commit to deal with the threat and social impacts of AMD rather than showing interest only in the mining activity. The government must avert immediate social risks of AMD because it has dire consequences on the human population and the environment. Solutions, like those generated by applying the SOS approach to SIA for AMD, should be proactively integrated in policies for sustainable consumption and production.

Application:

Instructions: In the following exercises you will work with a partner and/or group to create spaces for social work and social planning reflection, listening and exchange of ideas.

Exercise 1: Applying SOS in SIA for AMD

Consider you are a member of a Local Environmental Action Planning Committee in a location you know is grappling with Acid Mine Drainage (AMD). (Note, if you do not know of any, do some research to learn about these issues around the world. See for example, this website for a [list of selected acid mine drainage sites worldwide](#)).³⁵ You have been tasked with the United Nations Environment Programme's Global Environmental Fund South Africa country programme to formulate a community mobilisation strategy to engage the local municipal and parliamentary leadership. Explore how Signs of Safety (SOS) can be robustly applied in Social Impact Assessments (SIA) for policy makers to better understand Acid Mine Drainage (AMD) Impacts.

- List key stakeholders and gatekeepers critical to the location's Local Environmental Action Planning committee's formulation of the AMD community mobilisation strategy.
- Think of what these stakeholders would likely contribute when participating in research for a SIA using SOS. (If you are working in small groups, you may divide into roles of the various stakeholders for role play.)
- Identify strategies that can be used to engage in Participatory Appraisal (e.g., hosting community walks in areas affected by AMD) so that communities better understand the scope of AMD's impact to their livelihoods security and health.
- Use the following worksheet to conduct a SIA using SOS in your location. Be sure to include the identification of socio-economic and environmental hazards and injustices of Acid Mine Drainage.
- Think of what the safety plan could be. The safety plan is equivalent to a Social Management Plan.

Worksheet for SOS in SIA of (insert your chosen location) Location:

What are we worried	What is working well?	What needs to happen?

Judgement: Rate this situation using the scale of “1” to “10” below. Compare your notes and scores to others in your group. If there are differences in the group, place the different numbers on the continuum, and discuss the reasons for the different interpretations of the case.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

“0” indicates that communities are at “imminent risk and need relocation” (e.g., things are so bad for the community they can’t live in it).

“10” indicates “there are no or negligible risks” (e.g., and everyone knows the community is safe enough for the authorities to close the case)

Exercise 2: Getting Involved Locally

- Think of other instances in your own community where ecological injustices exist? (for example, brown field or superfund sites)? If you do not know of any, do some research to identify at least one issue in your local community. (For ideas see this website on [environmental issues](#)).³⁶
- Identify the socio- economic and environmental hazards and injustices of your chosen local issue.
- How does this issue relate to the Sustainable Development Goal 12: responsible consumption and production?
- What community partners are already working on these issues?
- How could you become involved?
- What are potential roles you could play? Describe for example, how social workers in this situation could promote holistic rights for the people and the planet and serve as guardians of environments and co-creators of sustainable communities.
- How could you apply the SOS approach in SIA in your local community issue? You may re-use the worksheet in Exercise 1 again for this exercise.
- Discuss your list of “What needs to happen?” items with your group and make policy or procedure recommendations.
- How would you scale the risk on the continuum from 1 to 10?

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Chapter 13: SDG 13: Climate Action

Community Transformation for Climate Justice in Bolivia

By Amanda Martin, MSW, MPH

Author Biography:

Amanda Martin earned two masters' degrees at the University of South Carolina through a Peace Corps partnership program. She has twenty-five years of international work experience, in Bolivia, Guatemala, Colombia, China, Thailand, and the USA. Amanda has worked overseas with community development, human rights, and public health projects, in rural Mayan villages, remote agricultural communities in Colombia and Bolivia, and in a Burmese refugee camp. She studied Conflict Resolution and Peace Studies as a Rotary Peace Scholar. Amanda currently works with Etta Projects in Bolivia and serves as the director of the Community Transformation Center in Bolivia. Amanda works with indigenous Bolivian women but does not herself share this ethnic identity. Email: amandagalemartin@gmail.com

Learning Outcomes:

1. Understand the connection between SDG 13 on Climate Action and social work.
2. Describe the impact climate change has and will continue to have across the planet.
3. Describe how local communities can organize to make change toward climate justice and a healthier planet.
4. Make informed decisions about personal behaviors that contribute to slowing the process of climate change.

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Editors' Degrowth Critique Summary of SDGs By Meredith Powers & Michaela Rinkel

Please see the Overview Chapter of this [Volume 3](#) of the edited workbook series, *Social Work Promoting Community and Environmental Sustainability*, for a more complete discussion of the ecosocial worldview and the editors' degrowth critique on the growth model, sustainable development and the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

This summary is offered not as a critique of the authors' chapter, but as a prompt to consider the chapter content in light of a call to engage in practice ***within and beyond*** the SDG framework.

Social work practice is clearly connected to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). As partners with and leaders in many communities where the work related to the SDGs occurs, we must consider our role in promoting community and environmental sustainability, ***within and beyond*** the SDGs. While we need to be well versed in the SDG language and concepts and involved in conversations and actions with global partners for the SDGs, we must maintain a critical eye on the limitations of this framework and help shift the conversation towards genuine solutions (i.e. which can be sustained in the long term). We maintain that this shift involves embracing an ecosocial worldview and taking a degrowth approach for transformational alternatives to sustainable development.

Despite the admirable idea to include sustainability (which originates in an ecosocial worldview) with development (which is based on an anthropocentric worldview) to create “sustainable development”, it merely created another model which ultimately is still situated in the anthropogenic, capitalist growth economic paradigm. This growth ideology keeps perpetuating the unsustainable and unjust byproducts of growth, which cannot lead to true sustainability as injustice is inherent in this model.

This volume of the workbook series is thus, an attempt to demonstrate to the profession our relevance to the SDGs, as well as to demonstrate to the world that social work is essential to the realization of sustainability, ***within and beyond*** the SDGs.

Within: What social work brings to the SDGs

Working to eradicate the injustices that stem from poverty, inequality, and oppression is at the core mission of social work and encompasses each of the 17 SDGs. For example, poverty and inequality impacts overall well-being, health, and civic participation, and oppression, affecting both people and planet. When we operate ***within*** the current framework of the SDGs, social work promotes solutions that impact multiple SDGs at once, such as universal social protection systems, fair and ethical employment practices, democratic participation, and sustainable natural resource management.

The social work profession’s unique perspectives and skill sets are sorely needed. These include our emphasis on social justice, empowerment, the strengths perspective, and the person in environment perspective (also known as people as place), along with the approach of using a systems framework. These social work perspectives help to make more evident the power dynamics that exist and highlight the ways they are changed as we work to alleviate injustices related to poverty, inequality, and oppression, often connected to environmental and ecological injustices. Working within the SDG framework which uses the “triple bottom line” of sustainable development (i.e., the advancement of people, profit, and planet) we

can help bring ecological justice to the forefront. However, with an ecosocial lens we can also move beyond sustainable development to shift the conversation and create truly sustainable solutions.

Beyond: Shifting to ecosocial worldview and degrowth

By embracing the ecosocial worldview we can shift the discussion and actions around the SDGs, taking a transformative approach that offers a critical understanding that the “triple bottom line” of sustainable development is not actually possible. Competition and scarcity undergird the growth ideology, where sustainable development is located, and in that model profit will always prevail over the aspirations of meeting the supposed competing needs of people and planet. Ultimately this framework will only serve to further perpetuate ecological injustices and power imbalances.

Degrowth involves localizing solutions and is not only about a shift in economic ideology, but in a revised society that lives cooperation, sharing the abundance, and reciprocity-based relationships among people and the planet. This revisioning necessitates identifying alternative measures of “success” which should not be wedded to mere economic gain. Within the growth ideology, our current indicators are flawed as they only measure limited aspects associated with economic growth and promote solutions which give preference to profit and primarily benefit those with power. Instead, we can adopt non-economically centered indicators of prosperity that are within the ecosocial worldview. These measures determine success within the context of the interdependent well-being of people and planet (e.g., time, relationships, health, etc.). By moving *beyond* sustainable development to degrowth as transformational alternatives, we can open up the opportunities for truly sustainable solutions.

Lesson:

Climate change impacts every living being on planet earth; no person, plant, or animal can escape the negative impact of human overconsumption of fossil fuels (e.g., coal, oil, and natural gas). These fossil fuels produce greenhouse gases that heat up the earth's temperature, causing glaciers to melt, oceans to rise, coastal flooding, increased climate-related disasters (e.g., hurricanes, typhoons, cyclones), drought and decreased food production.

It is imperative that we take immediate, collective action to address and redress human impacts. By 2020, the United Nations, through Sustainable Development Goal 13, aims to invest \$100 billion annually in developing nations for climate related disasters. "In the case of Bolivia, more than 66 percent of greenhouse gas emissions come from deforestation, so if we want to fight against climate change in Bolivia we have to halt deforestation," said Pablo Solon, a former Bolivian Ambassador to the U.N.¹ At the local level, Etta Projects is teaching youth, women, and community leaders the importance of reforestation, composting, organic gardening, trash separation, and recycling/re-using.² "We learned how to compost and use that rich fertilizer to fill empty plastic milk bags, to plant moringa trees for medicinal plant use," said Jackie, a 13-year-old from Santa Barbara. Jackie just graduated from the "Girl's Empowerment Project" with Etta Projects.

The Paris Agreement, drafted in November 2016 and signed by 194 parties as of August 2019, works to limit global temperature rise to below 2 degrees Celsius/3.6 degrees Fahrenheit.³ These parties collectively produce more than 88% of the global greenhouse gas emissions. China, the USA, and India have the greatest greenhouse gas emissions worldwide, totaling 42%. The US President began the process to withdraw the US from the Paris Agreement in November of 2019. Alternatively, the World People's Conference on Climate Change (hosted by Bolivia in 2010 and 2015) prioritizes the impact of climate change on "developing" nations.⁴ Unlike the United Nations' annual Conference of Parties, the WPCCC involves grassroots communities, which have sent over 8,000 delegates to share their

concerns with scientists, world leaders, and activists from across the globe. Thirty-five thousand people from 100 countries attended in 2010. These international steps are essential, but alone will not save life on our planet. International agreements are signed, but often are not implemented. We need to consider what we can do individually, as families, in our communities, at a local and regional level, and nationally, to contribute to slowing down the heating up process.

Inequitable Resource Consumption Around the World

There are over 7.7 billion people living on earth in 2019. In 1900, there were only 1.6 billion people. We have almost 5 times more people on earth than 120 years ago, creating a much greater demand for certain limited, non-renewable resources, such as fossil fuels used for energy. While planet Earth is heating up faster than ever before, due to human consumption of fossil fuels, there are other factors that play a role in energy consumption beyond population growth.

Energy consumption refers to using resources that generate power, including fossil fuels and renewable energy. The main fossil fuels are oil, coal and natural gas. The main renewable energy sources are wind, solar, hydroelectric power and biofuels.

Energy consumption is highest among “developed” countries, and there is inequity in their consumption patterns. For example, although the US population is 5% of the total world population, the country consumes 25% of the total energy. The top consumers of energy worldwide are: the USA, China, India, and Russia. On average, one person in the USA consumes as much energy as:

- 2 people in Japan
- 6 people in Mexico
- 13 people in China
- 31 people in India
- 128 people in Bangladesh
- 307 people in Tanzania
- 370 people in Ethiopia

How do we consume energy? Every time you make a purchase, you are consuming the energy that was used to make that product. For example, the energy required to produce meat vs. vegetable protein is compared in the chart below. When you choose to buy beef instead of lentils, you are consuming 30 times more energy.⁵ An [ecological footprint](#)⁶ is a way to calculate the amount of fossil fuels consumed in one year. You will explore these concepts further in the exercises provided at the end of the chapter.

We often take for granted our access to energy, municipal trash collection services, transportation, and food production in “developed”, industrialized nations. Inhabitants of “developed” nations typically can rely on continuous access to electricity, running water, and sanitation services in their communities. The case study below explores how one organization in Bolivia worked with a community to address the lack of access to essential resources that has been exacerbated by climate change, which demonstrates climate injustice.

Case Study: Bolivia

Bolivia, a landlocked country in the geographical center of South America, is home to 11 million people. Bolivia is rich in natural resources (#2 in natural gas in the Western hemisphere, #1 in lithium worldwide, and has quantities of petroleum, tin, silver, zinc, copper, cadmium, iron ore, and manganese). Despite these resources, Bolivia is the poorest country in South America (GDP per capita).

In the Bolivian highlands, water is scarce. Melting snow and glaciers provide water for the residents of the capital city of La Paz (over 2 million people, including the neighboring city of El Alto). In just 30 years, Bolivia’s glaciers have shrunk by 43%, severely impacting the water supply and food production (crops and livestock) in the region. Drought affects the quantity and quality of food produced, and forces small farmers who are already struggling financially, to seek support or migrate to the city. Many rural communities in Bolivia lack access to water. Although the government has a national program that provides funding and technical support to drill water wells, this only

works in areas where water is available. In 2016, Bolivia’s second largest lake (“Poopo”), dried up completely.

Etta Projects and “Las Bartolinas” in Buena Vista (Santa Cruz, Bolivia)

[Etta Projects](#)² (founded in 2003) is a non-profit organization that promotes public health via water, sanitation, and health education projects in Bolivian communities. Public health includes disease prevention, health education and promotion, and uses a community based approach to improving the quality of health for all. Etta Projects works with a staff of six Bolivian program coordinators who implement programs (water, sanitation, traditional medicine, violence prevention, girls’ empowerment, and village health promotion) in rural villages in Eastern Bolivia.

In 2017, Etta Projects opened a [Community Transformation Center](#) (CTC)⁷ to provide a space for Bolivian leaders, international students and volunteers, researchers, engineers, medical professionals, environmental educators, and many others to gather and exchange ideas, implement model systems, and create new methods to improve health and sanitation, quality of life, and environmental sustainability. The CTC is located on 96 acres of tropical forest, with nature trails, cabins, outdoor and indoor classrooms, traditional dining area, campfire circles, and much more. The CTC hosts 1-5 day workshops for local Bolivian health and sanitation promoters, water committee members, community leaders, women’s rights promoters, youth groups, and more.

Visitors to the CTC are invited to use the model systems : a solar oven, a bicycle blender, a solar powered hot water shower, a hand pump irrigation system, organic gardens, medicinal plants, a dry composting latrine, two compost systems, a plant nursery, and more. The goal is to create a space for international exchange of ideas and models for visitors to replicate at home with locally available materials.

In addition, a local Quechua (indigenous) women’s organization, the “National Federation of Rural Women Farmers: Bartolina Sisa”, is

working with Etta Projects to create positive change at the local level. This group, known as “Las Bartolinas” has a chapter in the municipality of Buena Vista (Santa Cruz department of Eastern Bolivia) which meets monthly at the town council hall in Buena Vista, arriving from remote villages over 2 hours away (crossing rivers on foot, traveling on dirt roads, by foot, motorcycle, or minivan). The organization is nationally recognized for its local indigenous women’s leadership, strong commitment to indigenous women’s empowerment, collaboration among its members, income generating projects in rural areas, advancement of gender and indigenous equality, and community development for agricultural villages. The Bartolina women’s group was founded in the Buena Vista region in 2008, with Doña Florinda Carmen elected as president. She was re-elected in 2014, by unanimous decision of the Bartolina women. She served for the first three years. Doña Florinda stated:

I only attended school for a few years. I don’t read and write well, and I knew nothing about how to create a project and get funding for it. But the Bartolina women wanted income generating agricultural production projects, and we organized to find support from the Bolivian national Indigenous Fund. In my three years as president, we organized five projects: cattle, laying hens, pigs, vegetable gardens, and coffee plants. Each group of women in their community received funding to start their project. The women contributed 30% (in money, labor, and equipment), and the Indigenous Fund invested the rest. Halfway through the project, the women had to present a financial report, with all of the receipts for their project purchases. We had to learn to use a computer, to create the report! Then we received the second half of the funding. The women earned money, learned how to raise their animals and manage their gardens, and had enough money left over to continue with a small project. We would like to work with you, to learn about the medicinal plants, as our new project. We can invest labor, time, and some materials for the garden. We want to learn.

Barriers and Solutions to Healthcare in Buena Vista

There are 54 village communities that comprise the Buena Vista region. Local healthcare in these villages, especially for women, is scarce, unreliable, unaffordable, and inappropriate in many cases. Rural health centers lack medical staff, are open 5 days a week during business hours (closed weekends and nights), lack medical equipment and basic medicine, and are located in larger towns (up to 12km distance on a dirt road, crossing wide rivers, from remote villages). Villagers with few resources (money, time, transportation, and ability to make the long journey) remain in their homes, while their illness becomes worse and they become weaker. Of the Bartolinas enrolled in the program, only 2 of the 8 communities have a basic health center, open only on weekdays, during regular business hours.. The majority of the residents of the communities where the Bartolinas come from live in poverty, despite their tireless work in their fields (rice, cattle, coffee, citrus, yucca, and vegetables). The population in these 8 villages totals 500 families, or 2,500 people. Four of the communities lack electricity, and one lacks running water. Once a month, the local health providers are required to visit the five remote villages in their district. However, due to lack of medical staff, lack of vehicles, poor road conditions, inclement weather (rain), and no budget to make the journey, the physician and nurse often cancel their trip. The villagers must wait another month for the medical team to arrive. Local medical staff expressed their need for trained bilingual health promoters to go into remote communities, visit people in their homes and schools, and provide basic and culturally appropriate healthcare for disease prevention and treatment. Nurse Macario, at the Espejitos health clinic, said:

We really need local community support for healthcare and disease prevention. If I had two trained health promoters in each village, that would make my job so much easier. People would get immediate attention, and not come to see me in the clinic when their problem has advanced to an emergency

Recently, 32 women from 8 of these communities participated in a six month course on medicinal plants at the CTC, and are currently

enrolled in a two-year health promoter course that includes modern medicine, first aid, emergency response, and women's health. The first step, the traditional medicine program, allowed Etta Projects to develop stronger relationships with the communities and their leaders, and to identify the women who have a strong commitment and aptitude for delivering healthcare, disease prevention, and health promotion/education. Etta Projects organizes the training, which is taught a Bolivian natural healer, with 24 years of experience in traditional medicine. Dr. Simon is recognized by the national government as a medical practitioner. The participants also share their knowledge and use of local plants with each other, trading plants and seeds to grow their medicinal plant gardens. Training local health promoters in medicinal plant use and knowledge provides an alternative and first point of contact for remote villagers who suffer from emergencies, as well as the most common ailments in the region (including diabetes, hypertension, gastritis, intestinal and respiratory infections, skin diseases/insect bites/rashes, and wounds/accidents). Juana, a Quechua woman in Palometillas, who graduated from the medicinal plant course, said:

In our community, many people suffer from hypertension, diabetes, and Chagas disease. There are natural remedies that our grandparents prepared, to help with the symptoms, but we didn't know what they are. Now we have recipe booklets for each of these diseases and are growing the plants in our backyards.

The health promoters plant and care for a medicinal plant garden in their community and replicate the garden in their homes (they each pay for half of the cost of their own plants, and provide construction materials and tools). Each promoter has a variety of the plants in her/his yard, to attend to patients from the community. The promoters charge a nominal fee for their services, to generate income and compensate for their time and service. The promoters organize a "traditional medicine village fair" to promote the use and knowledge of local medicinal plants, the benefits of using natural remedies, and how to use them effectively and safely. The municipal agricultural production program engineer has agreed to contribute to this project

by donating fencing materials, transporting those materials, and contributing to the workshops and village fairs.

In September 2016, Doña Florinda, president of the Bartolina women, stated:

Two months ago a Quechua (indigenous) woman from Isama (a remote community) was untying her horse. The rope was wrapped around her index finger; the horse bolted, and her finger went with it! She was in terrible pain, but the health center is far away (6 km on a dirt road, across two rivers) and there is no doctor. She had no money to pay for medical services, either. So she took her pliers and cut off the hanging piece, and was left with a bloody stump, with a sharp bone sticking out, like a fingernail. She waited two weeks, and then went to the health center, but it was closed. Her finger was infected and swollen like a grapefruit, she had a high fever. She came to me, here in the market, and I took her to the hospital. They gave her antibiotics, pain killers, and cut open the wound to clean it. She survived. If there were someone in her village, or maybe the woman herself, who knew what to do in case of emergency, she could have avoided the infection. We want to learn about the medicinal plants, to use the resources we already have in our communities. There are many medicinal plants that grow naturally here, but we chop them down with our machetes, because we don't know which ones they are, what they are good for, or how to use them.

Over a six-month period, the women's organization has achieved the following:

- Training of 25 indigenous Quechua women in the use of medicinal plants to treat common ailments in each of their 8 communities.

- Each of the 25 women has an organic garden of medicinal plants near her house that she plants, tends, harvests, and fertilizes.
- Each of the 25 women created a composting system for organic material, to produce organic fertilizer for the medicinal plant garden
- Each of the 25 women will create a rainwater barrel catchment system, to irrigate her garden
- Each of the 25 women tends to local villagers who seek her expertise in treating illnesses and ailments, using the plants in her garden.

Health Promotion through Organic Agriculture and Nutrition

More recently, the Bartolina women organized a list of 90 of their members, in 8 villages, who approached Etta Projects, requesting a six-month course on organic agriculture and nutrition. Etta Projects has secured a portion of this funding, to train 15 women, and is currently seeking funding for the remaining participants. The day long workshops will be held every two weeks at Etta Projects' Community Transformation Center in Buena Vista, and will be facilitated by an organic farming technician, a cook, and a nutritionist. The participants will learn with hands-on practice, working in the organic gardens at the CTC and preparing delicious home-made meals with locally grown ingredients. Doña Florinda said:

We want to grow our own food, free of chemicals. Why do you think the rates of cancer are so high here? All of the crops are sprayed with chemicals, which drain into the soil and the water. We can't escape it. So we want to learn to grow organic food, to provide to our families, to keep them healthy. We can sell the surplus in the market, to generate income for our expenses.

The Bartolinas, in their new organic gardening and nutrition project, aim to:

- Participate in 12-day long workshops to learn about basic nutrition and healthy meal preparation
- Learn organic gardening techniques to produce chemical free produce for their families
- Create and tend an organic garden at their homes to implement the techniques learned
- Produce organic pesticides and fungicides for use on their gardens
- Share these techniques with other villagers to promote chemical free produce for local consumption
- Create a market stall to sell surplus organic produce, to generate income for expanding the organic production
- Create a local radio campaign to raise awareness among the local population on the danger of chemicals used in food production and the availability of local organic produce
- Create “food journals” documenting the meals prepared in their homes, with new recipes learned in their course (focused on organic vegetable protein). They will share their adaptations to the recipes with each other at the workshops.
- Create “gardening journals” documenting the work, pests, solutions, challenges, and harvests in each of their gardens. They will share their gardening challenges and solutions with each other at the workshops.

Innovation for Community and Environmental Sustainability

In addition, the Bartolinas are partnering with Etta Projects on “The Renewable Energy and Empowerment of Quechua Women” project. In this project, the Bartolinas will participate in a four-day workshop to learn how to build bicycle powered blenders and solar ovens to use in their homes. The blenders and ovens allow the women, who are trained as medicinal plant promoters, to prepare nutritious, medicinal food, drinks, and tonics to consume in their homes. The bicycle blenders and solar ovens are sustainable kitchen appliances that will improve their health and quality of life. Many of them live in

communities with no electricity. They cook with firewood, which is scarce and creates problems of deforestation. They are aware of the negative impact of deforestation and want to use solar and human powered energy for food preparation.

The women can also sell their blender and oven products in their villages to generate much needed income for their families. The project's impact will be expanded by empowering the women to not only use these renewable energy appliances themselves, but to also take their knowledge and the blueprints and train other women in their villages on how to build their own bicycle blenders and solar ovens. The villages range from 30-250 families each, thus the impact may reach up to 500 families.

The "Renewable Energy and Empowerment of Quechua Women" project aims include:

- Nine indigenous women from nine different villages will participate in the trainings.
- One four-day workshop will provide training and supplies and teach basic bicycle mechanics and building and maintenance of the bicycle blender. Each of the nine women will build one to take home with her to her village.
- One four-day workshop will provide training and supplies and teach building and maintenance of solar cook ovens. Each of the nine women will build one to take home with her to her village.
- Each of the bicycle blenders and solar ovens will be promoted as models in the villages, to create interest among other villagers. The women who have learned to build the models will organize with other families to replicate the model in the village.
- The women will use the bicycle blenders to prepare medicinal plant remedies and food for themselves, their families, and villagers, thus promoting exercise and use of renewable energy.

The “Renewable Energy and Empowerment of Quechua Women” of Etta Projects is partnering with the [IFSW Climate Justice Program](#),⁸ as the [inaugural project](#).⁹ The IFSW Climate Justice Program aims to raise awareness of and funds to support this innovative project that promotes climate justice in Bolivia through renewable energy, women’s empowerment, and the use of organic agriculture and traditional medicine.

Application:

Instructions:

Complete the following exercises individually or in groups. The first exercise concerns climate change and how we understand it. The second exercise focuses on individual energy consumption patterns and how to conserve energy in your daily activities, modify your lifestyle and make informed choices that recognize energy as a valuable resource. The third exercise asks you to examine your local energy supply. Most people are not aware of how energy reaches their home. If you don’t know the answers, this is your homework. Investigate and learn about your local energy source, location, protection, quality, and maintenance of the system. Finally, the last exercise applies the case study from Bolivia to social work practice.

Exercise 1: Climate Change and Climate Justice Discussion

Instructions: Break into small groups (5 people) to discuss your understanding of climate change using the following questions. Come back to the larger group and present the results of your small group conversations.

- What is Climate Change?
- In what context have you heard this term?
- How does climate change impact your daily life?
- How does climate change impact others in your community?
Others around the world?
- What is climate justice?

Exercise 2: Calculating Your Ecological Footprint

1. What is your ecological footprint? An [ecological footprint](#)⁶ is calculated based on consumption of fossil fuels in one year. Do you know how much you consume? There are several organizations helping to educate and offer tools to calculate your footprint. Try out a few to explore your ecological footprint. For example:
 - [The Global Footprint Network](#)¹⁰
 - [Earth Day Network](#)¹¹
 - The [IFSW Climate Justice Program](#),⁸ offers [tips to shrink your ecological footprint](#),¹² read these and the resources listed. They also have a [footprint calculator for your travel](#).¹³ Use this calculator to estimate the suggested contribution to redress any of your recent or upcoming travel plans. Consider contributing to support the active Climate Justice Projects around the world.
2. What are your results from these ecological footprint calculator tools? Discuss with a partner or in small groups
 - Are you surprised by your results?
 - What can you do to decrease your ecological footprint?
 - Transportation:
 - Consider transportation options. Can you walk or cycle on a regular basis?
 - Is public transportation an option where you live?
 - Can you organize carpooling?
 - Food:
 - Where do you purchase your groceries?
 - Where does your produce come from?
 - How far does food (e.g., bananas) travel to reach your breakfast table?
 - Can you “eat locally”, eating foods produced locally, in season?
 - What are the foods that you “need” to consume, that come from far away (e.g., citrus, bananas, coffee, chocolate, etc.)?

- Is there a local, organic farmer's market where you can support local farmers and reduce your carbon footprint?
- What else can you do to reduce your footprint?

3. What can you do to reduce your ecological footprint? List five concrete actions that you can realistically implement and continue over time, to change your habits and reduce your contribution to climate change.

Consider for example:

- Heating and air conditioning on average account for 50% of household energy consumption. Consider turning off the A/C and opening the windows, at home and in the car.
- Clothes dryers use loads of energy! Do you have an outdoor line to dry your clothes on? On an indoor drying rack?
- Dishwashers consume a lot of energy. Try washing your dishes by hand in a basin of warm soapy water. Be mindful of the water usage also (see Vol. 1, Chapter 12)
- Consider taking shorter showers with colder water.
- Can you walk, cycle, or take public transportation instead of driving a car to your destination?
- Buy locally grown, organic food rather than food shipped from farther away.

What will you commit to doing? (think also of who you will tell, and how you would like to be held accountable for these goals.)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Exercise 3: Energy in Your Local Community

Instructions: *Discuss the following questions with a partner or small group:*

1. Do you know how your electricity is produced?
2. How do you know the gas mileage of your car/the vehicle you drive/ride?
3. Are there bicycle paths in your community? Do you own and use a bicycle?
4. Is there a community garden in your area? Do people use it?
5. Is/was there public transportation in your community? Do people use it? If not, why not?
6. Where does the garbage end up, once it is collected by the garbage trucks? Is it processed?
7. Where do recycled materials go, in your community?
8. What happens to the human waste from your home? Does it go to a septic tank or a city sewer system? How is human waste used in other countries?

Exercise 4: Bolivia Case Study Reflection

1. How has Bolivia, and the Buena Vista area been impacted by climate change?
2. How are the Bartolinas contributing to slowing down climate change and promoting climate justice?
3. The Bartolinas are a local chapter of a national organization. The local indigenous women are organizing to request projects that promote health, education, and women's empowerment. What is happening in your community? Are local groups organizing for improved health, education, and empowerment? How can this impact climate change and promote climate justice?
4. What does the community need to do, to ensure that the project is sustainable? Factors: budget, income, leadership, participation, technical skills.
5. What is the long-term impact of this women's organic gardening and nutrition course? How might the project

- impact the women, their children, their families, and their neighbors?
6. How could social workers play key roles in helping promote climate justice?

Resources:

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Chapter 14: SDG 14: Life Below Water

One Health: How the Health of the Oceans and Humans Connect

By Susan A. Taylor

Author Biography:

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Learning Outcomes:

1. Understand the connection between SDG 14 on Life Below Water and social work.
2. Through examination of the impact of harmful algae blooms, describe the connections between life under water and terrestrial life.
3. Apply the “5 W’s” about problem solving to the issue of marine pollution.
4. Identify ways that social workers can impact the health and well-being of water environments.

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**Editors' Degrowth Critique Summary of SDGs
By Meredith Powers & Michaela Rinkel**

Please see the Overview Chapter of this [Volume 3](#) of the edited workbook series, *Social Work Promoting Community and Environmental Sustainability*, for a more complete discussion of the ecosocial worldview and the editors' degrowth critique on the growth model, sustainable development and the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

This summary is offered not as a critique of the authors' chapter, but as a prompt to consider the chapter content in light of a call to engage in practice ***within and beyond*** the SDG framework.

Social work practice is clearly connected to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). As partners with and leaders in many communities where the work related to the SDGs occurs, we must consider our role in promoting community and environmental sustainability, ***within and beyond*** the SDGs. While we need to be well versed in the SDG language and concepts and involved in conversations and actions with global partners for the SDGs, we must maintain a critical eye on the limitations of this framework and help shift the conversation towards genuine solutions (i.e. which can be sustained in the long term). We maintain that this shift involves embracing an ecosocial worldview and taking a degrowth approach for transformational alternatives to sustainable development.

Despite the admirable idea to include sustainability (which originates in an ecosocial worldview) with development (which is based on an anthropocentric worldview) to create "sustainable development", it merely created another model which ultimately is still situated in the anthropogenic, capitalist growth economic paradigm. This growth ideology keeps perpetuating the unsustainable and unjust byproducts of growth, which cannot lead to true sustainability as injustice is inherent in this model.

This volume of the workbook series is thus, an attempt to demonstrate to the profession our relevance to the SDGs, as well as to demonstrate to the world that social work is essential to the realization of sustainability, *within and beyond* the SDGs.

Within: What social work brings to the SDGs

Working to eradicate the injustices that stem from poverty, inequality, and oppression is at the core mission of social work and encompasses each of the 17 SDGs. For example, poverty and inequality impacts overall well-being, health, and civic participation, and oppression, affecting both people and planet. When we operate *within* the current framework of the SDGs, social work promotes solutions that impact multiple SDGs at once, such as universal social protection systems, fair and ethical employment practices, democratic participation, and sustainable natural resource management.

The social work profession's unique perspectives and skill sets are sorely needed. These include our emphasis on social justice, empowerment, the strengths perspective, and the person in environment perspective (also known as people as place), along with the approach of using a systems framework. These social work perspectives help to make more evident the power dynamics that exist and highlight the ways they are changed as we work to alleviate injustices related to poverty, inequality, and oppression, often connected to environmental and ecological injustices. Working within the SDG framework which uses the "triple bottom line" of sustainable development (i.e., the advancement of people, profit, and planet) we can help bring ecological justice to the forefront. However, with an ecosocial lens we can also move beyond sustainable development to shift the conversation and create truly sustainable solutions.

Beyond: Shifting to ecosocial worldview and degrowth

By embracing the ecosocial worldview we can shift the discussion and actions around the SDGs, taking a transformative approach that offers a critical understanding that the "triple bottom line" of sustainable development is not actually possible. Competition and scarcity

undergird the growth ideology, where sustainable development is located, and in that model profit will always prevail over the aspirations of meeting the supposed competing needs of people and planet. Ultimately this framework will only serve to further perpetuate ecological injustices and power imbalances.

Degrowth involves localizing solutions and is not only about a shift in economic ideology, but in a revisioned society that lives cooperation, sharing the abundance, and reciprocity-based relationships among people and the planet. This revisioning necessitates identifying alternative measures of “success” which should not be wedded to mere economic gain. Within the growth ideology, our current indicators are flawed as they only measure limited aspects associated with economic growth and promote solutions which give preference to profit and primarily benefit those with power. Instead, we can adopt non-economically centered indicators of prosperity that are within the ecosocial worldview. These measures determine success within the context of the interdependent well-being of people and planet (e.g., time, relationships, health, etc.). By moving **beyond** sustainable development to degrowth as transformational alternatives, we can open up the opportunities for truly sustainable solutions.

Lesson:

The purpose of this chapter is to explore Goal 14 of the United Nations Sustainable Development Initiative: *Life Below Water*. This goal includes the following areas: 1) reducing marine pollution, 2) protecting and restoring ecosystems, 3) reducing ocean acidification, 4) sustainable fishing, 5) conserving coastal and marine areas, 6) ending subsidies contributing to overfishing, 7) increasing the economic benefits of sustainable use of marine resources, 8) increasing scientific knowledge, research, and technology for ocean health, and 9) supporting small scale fishers.¹

Each of these nine study areas are vast, have many interweaving and unique aspects, as well as tremendous complexity. Their significance,

however, can not be overstated. Oceans cover 75% of the earth's surface, absorb 30% of the carbon dioxide of the planet, and provide basic sustenance for large numbers of people (i.e., over 3 billion people depend on marine and coastal biodiversity for their livelihoods).² Quite simply, the health of oceans, their tributaries and the creatures that live there are of paramount importance to the health of all life on the planet. This lesson directs social workers' attention to this significant aspect of well-being.

To assist in this investigation several tables have been developed providing links to leading information that can clarify the nuances of water environments (e.g., oceans, mangroves, rivers), habitation, and climate change challenges.

Table 1 provides weblinks for major ocean research institutes. The 12 institutes develop research and targeted programming covering the majority of oceans and ocean environments worldwide. Research being conducted at these institutes provides a web of information on ocean health, species vulnerability, climate and weather changes, large- and small-scale economic vulnerability, and spatial, geographic sustainability.

Table 2 provides major reports that identify some of the nuanced aspects of the 9 categories identified in Goal 14. These distinctions include, for example, issues such as hypoxia, harmful algal blooms, sea level rise, and sentinel species identification that provide knowledge to coastal and inland communities to assist with adaptation and mitigation issues as needed.

Finally, Table 3 provides various video links that include academic lectures, YouTube, and CNN big story investigations. The UCTV videos offer valuable academic lectures from Tier I research academies within the California (USA) system investigating oceans, climate, and various coastal issues.³ Included, as well, are videos from the Public Broadcast Service "Frontline" series that introduces investigative journalism into water related issues.⁴ These tables are highlighted at the end of the chapter.

Overview of the Issues

Water is the life blood for the survival of all species on the planet.⁵ Created from complex biological and chemical interplay, the ultimate combination of water and air makes for the creation of unique structures such as oceans, lakes, rivers, and aquifers, as well as, the evolution of creatures that both inhabit the water environments and partake of their top to bottom food web.⁶ Oceans support life well beyond their depths and shorelines, as highlighted by the impacts of El Niño and La Niña ocean cycles. These cycles, influenced by warming or cooling trade winds, create weather patterns of drought or flooding across the terrestrial landscape, affecting world wide quality of life, availability of water, and food webs in the ocean and on land.^{7,8}

Water environments (e.g. mangroves, tidal basins, estuaries, rivers and tributaries, lakes, oceans, and bays), access to and the quality of water (e.g., infrastructure, community wells, run-off, point and non point pollution), hydrologic cycles (e.g., ocean oscillation, El Nino and La Nina events, ocean acidification, king tides, glacial melting and sea level rise), and water ownership (e.g., public or private, use of surface water, ground water, aquifers) are typically not study areas for social workers. The exceptions have been public health emergencies (e.g., Flint, Michigan water crisis, oil spills), disaster operations/management (e.g., mass flooding, hurricane or typhoon relief, and dam failures) or mass population migrations (e.g., due to war, famine, flooding, drought) where social workers are involved with multidisciplinary response teams.⁹ In these cases, direct and immediate intervention is the most familiar response by social work. Increasingly, however, social workers are by necessity becoming more challenged to expand professional capacity to include more complex environmental problems (e.g., impacts of climate change). Beyond advocating for environmental justice and engaging in crisis intervention which has included impacting concerns of geographic location and social positioning, the need to understand the dynamics of the physical environment itself is paramount.¹⁰ This includes impact upon all manner of creatures that cohabitate and co-influence those environments.^{11,12} Nowhere is this more true than with the evolving multi-dimensional crisis of "life below water," and the

expected exacerbation of hazards in this environment from climate instability and human generated pollution.^{13,14} Features of these crises include the impact of microplastics on marine environments;¹⁵ the increase of harmful algal blooms¹⁶ from nutrient loading combined with rising ocean and land temperatures; the impacts of ocean acidification on fish and other marine life,^{17,18,19} and mangrove regeneration for coastal protection and the economic security of economically and geographically vulnerable people.^{20,21}

Social work's multi-leveled approach can complement other disciplines' upstream/midstream/ downstream investigations to expand understanding involving the entire biosphere.²² In particular, social work's focus on cultural nuance, trauma informed practice, and ecological as well as systems analyses enhances multi or transdisciplinary environmental practice and justice inquiries. This may include human dimension research (see report in Table 2) investigating response incongruence among various populations who are adversely affected by environmental factors (for example, voting a climate change denier into public office).^{23,24} Human dimensions research²⁵ has been particularly significant in ocean and coastal issues since the early 2000s, and is a framework that is well suited to social work inquiries. This research is directed at how and why humans value natural resources, how humans want resources managed, and how humans affect or are affected by natural resources management decisions.²⁶

Conclusion

Social workers offer a unique perspective within multi or transdisciplinary teams investigating water environments. This is particularly true with respect to the impacts on the health and well being of all species inhabiting or interfacing within a specific spatial area. This type of viewpoint is known as "one health," and includes as a field of inquiry all the biosphere wherein the environmental concern is present.²⁷

To be successful in environmental work in general requires acknowledging that humans are but one species among many whose

health and welfare are intertwined in a delicate environmental dance. Nowhere is this truer than in water environments--particularly oceans--where all planetary life began, and where negative human impact continues to adversely affect that environment. It is not hyperbole to say that understanding the challenges presented in Goal 14 are fundamental to maintaining life on earth.

Application:

Exercise 1: Harmful Algal Blooms

Areas where environmental degradation and climate change are adversely impacting water elements are at the intersection of ocean and terrestrial life. There are significant multidimensional factors in the analysis of water quantity (i.e., including ground, aquifer, and surface water), access & quality of water for human and multispecies consumption, along with economic impacts on ocean derived livelihoods particularly commercial and subsistence "farming" (e.g., through harvesting fish, crabs, shrimp, oysters, aquaculture industries, etc.) that are affected by environmental degradation.^{28,29} Harmful algal blooms (HABS) are one area that highlights the intersection of human generated and natural processes to produce negative environmental impacts. HABS are found both on land in lakes, rivers and ponds as well as in the shallow waters of ocean shorelines and estuaries. They have potential deadly consequences for all species exposed to them. Drawing from reports (Table 2), chapter bibliography, and videos (Table 3) explore the following questions:

- What are harmful algal blooms?
- Why are these blooms important to both subsistence and commercial watermen (i.e., fishermen, crabbers, shrimpers, oyster farmers)?
- How and in what ways are these blooms dangerous to the health of all species both on land and at sea?
- What are some sentinel animals that act as "canaries in the mine" for harmful algal blooms?
- Why is knowledge of HABS important to social workers?

Exercise 2: Marine Pollution

Marine pollution caused by agricultural and industrial run-off, ghost nets, ballast discharge (from ships), microplastics, general ocean dumping, etc. has dire consequences for the marine life who inhabit oceans and other water environments.³⁰ Sentinel species (e.g., whales, frogs, birds, oysters, mussels, warm water fish, sea lions, seals, turtles, river and sea otters) are in some cases part of and in others partake of the same food web as humans. Understanding marine pollution, helps understand effects of endocrine disruptors, food shortages, etc. affecting species in these environments. Drawing from the reports (Table 2), chapter bibliography, and videos (Table 3) (primarily "Poisoned Waters" and "altered oceans") explore the following questions using a "who, what, when, where, why, and how" basic analysis framework.

Who: Who are the industrial and non-industrial polluters of the specific marine environment?

Who is the most at risk in terms of poor health from the marine pollution (humans, marine life)?

Who has the potential of losing their livelihood from marine pollution (e.g., watermen, seaside restaurant owners, shipping companies, etc.)?

What: What are the geographic parameters of the marine environment that needs inclusion in the analysis (e.g., tributaries, lakes, intertidal basins, estuaries, bays, oceans)?

What are the legacy pollutants in the marine environment (e.g., industrial chemicals, trash, sewage, plastics)?

What are the social and political barriers to cleaning up the marine pollution?

What are the economic barriers to cleaning up the marine pollution?

What weather/climate factors have contributed to the marine pollution (e.g. massive flooding from hurricanes, warming of the water contributing to harmful algal blooms)?

What knowledge do social workers need to assist in developing an intervention strategy?

When: Are there particular times of the year where marine pollution is more prevalent (e.g., pesticide run-off from agricultural areas during wet seasons; in times of industrial waste water release, etc)?

Has there been a recent public emergency, if so when, and what was the duration (e.g., hurricanes, extreme fire extinguishing conditions, typhoons, earthquakes, levee or dam failure)?

Does the presence or absence of migration of particular species contribute to marine pollution?

When should social workers investigate possible interventions?

Where: Where is marine pollution concentrated?

Where are the polluters in geographic proximity to the pollution field?

Where are vulnerable populations (animals, marine life, humans) in relationship to the pollutants and pollution field?

Why: Why are these pollutants of concern?

Why are these pollutants in the geographic and spatial field that they are in (e.g., due to rain run-off, prevalence of discharge pipes, lack of sewage systems)

How: How are all of the factors above pertinent to the marine pollution event?

How can social workers intervene in the crisis?

How can social workers work with other disciplines to mitigate the problem

Table 1: Significant Global Ocean Science Research Institutes
(weblinks)

Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC-UNESCO)(France)	http://www.ioc-unesco.org/
Scripps Institution of Oceanography (CA- USA)	https://scripps.ucsd.edu/
Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution (MA-USA)	https://www.whoi.edu/
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (USA) (Climate & maps)	https://www.climate.gov/ https://www.noaa.gov/
Bedford Institute of Oceanography (Canada)	http://www.bio.gc.ca/index-en.php
National Institute of Oceanography (India)	https://www.nio.org/
Royal Netherlands Institute for Ocean Research	https://www.nwo.nl/en/about-nwo/organisation/nwo-domains/nwoi/nioz
Korea Institute of Ocean Science and Technology	https://www.kiost.ac.kr/eng.do
National Oceanography Center (United Kingdom)	https://www.noc.ac.uk/
Australian Institute of Marine Science	https://www.aims.gov.au/
International Ocean Institute (Malta)	https://www.ioinst.org/about-1/structure-and-network/ioi-headquarters/
Shirshov Institute of Oceanology- Russian Academy of Science (Russia)	https://ocean.ru/en/

Table 2: Significant Reports on Aspects of Ocean Health and Marine Life

National Centers for Coastal Science: Human Dimensions Strategic Plan FY 2009-2014	https://archive.org/details/NccosHumanDimensionsStrategicPlan
Marine Aquaculture Strategic Plan 2016-2020 (NOAA)	https://www.afdf.org/wp-content/uploads/8h-NOAA-Marine-Aquaculture-Strategic-Plan-FY-2016-2020.pdf
United Nations Decade of Ocean Science from Sustainable Development 2021-2030	https://en.unesco.org/ocean-decade
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations: The State of World Fisheries and Agriculture 2016	http://www.fao.org/3/i9540en/i9540en.pdf
The Importance of Mangroves to People (UNEP)	https://www.unep-wcmc.org/resources-and-data/the-importance-of-mangroves-to-people--a-call-to-action
An Ocean Blueprint for the 21st Century (United States)	https://oceanconservancy.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/000_ocean_full_report-1.pdf
The State of the Atlantic Ocean (Canada)	https://www.canada.ca/en/fisheries-oceans/news/2019/04/state-of-the-atlantic-ocean-report-shows-the-effects-of-climate-change-on-marine-ecosystems.html
From Monsoons to Microbes: Understanding the ocean's role in human health	http://dels.nas.edu/Report/From-Monsoons-Microbes-Understanding/6368
Europe's Seas and Coasts	https://www.eea.europa.eu/themes/water/europes-seas-and-coasts/europes-seas-and-coasts

Interagency Oceans and Human Health Research and Implementation Plan	https://www.whoi.edu/cms/files/COHH-impleplan_31823.pdf
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Table 3: Selected Videos for Extended Exploration

Sustainability-fishing	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uM63_ljLiP8
Sustainability-Oceans	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CpKVsu20JvY
Sustainability - Mangroves	https://www.greatbigstory.com/stories/sri-lanka-mangrove-master
The Importance of Mangroves	https://www.uctv.tv/shows/Mangroves-The-Skin-of-Our-Coasts-32430
Trade winds- ocean- climate change and oceans	https://www.uctv.tv/shows/Arctic-Sea-Ice-Upper-Atmosphere-Transport-and-Trade-Winds-34571
Climate change impacts and adaptation	https://www.uctv.tv/shows/Center-for-Climate-Change-Impacts-and-Adaptations-33720
Ocean Acidification	https://www.uctv.tv/shows/Ocean-Acidification-and-Other-Stories-Overcoming-Climate-Anxiety-at-a-Time-of-Global-Crisis-32756
Harmful Algal Blooms	https://www.uctv.tv/shows/Beware-the-Blooms-Harmful-Algal-Blooms-in-Your-Ocean-32433
Sustainable Water-Ocean Fog	https://www.greatbigstory.com/stories/a-foggy-solution-to-a-water-shortage?storylist_type=season&storylist_id=103
Poisoned Waters-tributary and marine pollution (Public Broadcasting Company- USA)	https://www.pbs.org/video/frontline-poisoned-waters/

Los Angeles Times, Altered Oceans Series (Pulitzer Winning) (part series)	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6uWsxUqYfp8 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WnG-0EBqmFE
NASA: The ocean, a driving force for weather and climate	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6vgvTeuoDWY

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Chapter 15: SDG 15: Life on Land

Preserving and Protecting Forests and Forest Dependent Communities in India by Implementing the Forest Rights Act of 2006

By Malathi Adusumalli and Soumya Dutta

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Learning Outcomes:

1. Consider how social work connects with SDG 15: Life on Land.
2. Understand the significance of forests for ensuring food and livelihood security of forest dwelling/forest dependent communities.
3. Describe the changing governance contexts, historical trajectory from colonial to contemporary, that affect forest dwellers/forest dependent communities.
4. Describe the connection between rights and livelihood by describing the rights granted under The Forest Rights Act (FRA) 2006 for preserving and protecting forest based/dependent livelihoods.
5. Relate how FRA (2006) implementation could enable us to move towards reaching community and environmental sustainability

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Editors' Degrowth Critique Summary of SDGs By Meredith Powers & Michaela Rinkel

Please see the Overview Chapter of this [Volume 3](#) of the edited workbook series, *Social Work Promoting Community and Environmental Sustainability*, for a more complete discussion of the ecosocial worldview and the editors' degrowth critique on the growth model, sustainable development and the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

This summary is offered not as a critique of the authors' chapter, but as a prompt to consider the chapter content in light of a call to engage in practice ***within and beyond*** the SDG framework.

Social work practice is clearly connected to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). As partners with and leaders in many communities where the work related to the SDGs occurs, we must consider our role in promoting community and environmental sustainability, ***within and beyond*** the SDGs. While we need to be well versed in the SDG language and concepts and involved in conversations and actions with global partners for the SDGs, we must maintain a critical eye on the limitations of this framework and help shift the conversation towards genuine solutions (i.e. which can be sustained in the long term). We maintain that this shift involves embracing an ecosocial worldview and taking a degrowth approach for transformational alternatives to sustainable development.

Despite the admirable idea to include sustainability (which originates in an ecosocial worldview) with development (which is based on an anthropocentric worldview) to create "sustainable development", it merely created another model which ultimately is still situated in the anthropogenic, capitalist growth economic paradigm. This growth ideology keeps perpetuating the unsustainable and unjust byproducts of growth, which cannot lead to true sustainability as injustice is inherent in this model.

This volume of the workbook series is thus, an attempt to demonstrate to the profession our relevance to the SDGs, as well as to demonstrate to the world that social work is essential to the realization of sustainability, ***within and beyond*** the SDGs.

Within: What social work brings to the SDGs

Working to eradicate the injustices that stem from poverty, inequality, and oppression is at the core mission of social work and encompasses each of the 17 SDGs. For example, poverty and inequality impacts overall well-being, health, and civic participation, and oppression, affecting both people and planet. When we operate

within the current framework of the SDGs, social work promotes solutions that impact multiple SDGs at once, such as universal social protection systems, fair and ethical employment practices, democratic participation, and sustainable natural resource management.

The social work profession's unique perspectives and skill sets are sorely needed. These include our emphasis on social justice, empowerment, the strengths perspective, and the person in environment perspective (also known as people as place), along with the approach of using a systems framework. These social work perspectives help to make more evident the power dynamics that exist and highlight the ways they are changed as we work to alleviate injustices related to poverty, inequality, and oppression, often connected to environmental and ecological injustices. Working within the SDG framework which uses the "triple bottom line" of sustainable development (i.e., the advancement of people, profit, and planet) we can help bring ecological justice to the forefront. However, with an ecosocial lens we can also move beyond sustainable development to shift the conversation and create truly sustainable solutions.

Beyond: Shifting to ecosocial worldview and degrowth

By embracing the ecosocial worldview we can shift the discussion and actions around the SDGs, taking a transformative approach that offers a critical understanding that the "triple bottom line" of sustainable development is not actually possible. Competition and scarcity undergird the growth ideology, where sustainable development is located, and in that model profit will always prevail over the aspirations of meeting the supposed competing needs of people and planet. Ultimately this framework will only serve to further perpetuate ecological injustices and power imbalances.

Degrowth involves localizing solutions and is not only about a shift in economic ideology, but in a revised society that lives cooperation, sharing the abundance, and reciprocity-based relationships among people and the planet. This revisioning necessitates identifying alternative measures of "success" which should not be wedded to

mere economic gain. Within the growth ideology, our current indicators are flawed as they only measure limited aspects associated with economic growth and promote solutions which give preference to profit and primarily benefit those with power. Instead, we can adopt non-economically centered indicators of prosperity that are within the ecosocial worldview. These measures determine success within the context of the interdependent well-being of people and planet (e.g., time, relationships, health, etc.). By moving **beyond** sustainable development to degrowth as transformational alternatives, we can open up the opportunities for truly sustainable solutions.

Lesson:

While development has been hailed as significant in bettering living conditions, it is also important to critically reflect on how development takes place: whether sustainability informs a development agenda; whether the rights of the communities to shape their future are ensured; whether the concern for the environment is taken into account and whether such concern gets reflected in policies and programmes. Others have extended this critique of development, as it is situated in the mainstream economic model of growth, as they have pointed to the 'limits to growth'.¹ These 'degrowth'² scholars have called upon governments and world citizens to set policies in an attempt to reverse the trajectory of damage to our planet and de-centre from concentrating only on economic prosperity. It has also been pointed out by Green, in his Ted Talk (2015),³ that we need a social progress index to reflect our progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals wherein other, non-economic indicators need to be considered.

This lesson begins with concerns about traditional development goals and processes that concentrate primarily on economic progress while greatly neglecting its effects on the environment or sustainability. One of the critical concerns for sustainable development has been the concern with meeting the needs of the people without jeopardizing

the needs of future generations. Beginning with the Brundtland Commission report in 1987, [Our Common Future](#),⁴ the idea of sustainable development has become significant to inform development thinking and processes across the world. In this context it is worthwhile to recall the words of Mahatma Gandhi who said that “there’s enough on this planet for everyone’s needs, but not everyone’s greed.”⁵

The United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

In this context the UN [Sustainable Development Goals](#)⁶ provides a significant push towards realising ecological and social justice, particularly in a country like India with significant social and ecological inequalities. While still rooted in the development model of economic growth, the SDGs are a move in the right direction as they acknowledge that we need to consider the environment and people’s overall well-being and not merely economic progress. It has been pointed out that the sustainability concept needs to be understood in a more holistic and comprehensive way. This requires a paradigm shift in the way that economies work, with a transformation from unsustainable, unregulated capitalism into ecologically and socially sustainable economic practices at local, as well as global levels ([Schmitz, Matyók, Sloan & James, 2012](#)).⁷

[SDG15](#)⁸ is concerned with the sustainability of natural resources through responsible use, restoration, and conservation with respect to life on land, be it dry-lands, wetlands, forests, mountains and other natural habitats. It seeks to promote the sustainable management of forests, stop deforestation, increase reforestation and afforestation, as well as repair degraded forests. It also emphasizes the integration of biodiversity and ecosystem values into local and national planning, poverty reduction and development processes. Further, it seeks to promote equitable and fair sharing of benefits that arise from the use of any ‘genetic’ resources as well as promoting suitable access to these resources, in line with global consensus. The communities who dwell in and are dependent on the forests, need the support of institutional mechanisms to improve their chances of sustenance of life and this requires that they are seen as partners in such processes

and mechanisms. Further there is always a strong conflict between the natural resources support for economic growth (traditionally seen as modern development) and the needs of communities who are dependent on the very same resources for their habitat and livelihood needs. There have also been instances where the concern for the environment has taken precedence over communities in the declaration of forests as protected or reserved areas, thereby endangering the livelihoods of the people and consequently their well-being. This lesson is concerned with the recognition of the needs of the Indigenous communities and traditional forest dwellers in India and their rights along with preserving nature, rather than merely preserving and/or capitalizing on natural resources.

Social Work and Links to Sustainable Development in India

Social work research and practice are concerned with the ways ecological and social justice are realised. This essentially means that the SDGs are close to the heart of professional social work goals and would benefit significantly from the knowledge of social work, along with other disciplines, in order to realise them. The furthering of the SDGs, thus, is a global effort in which social work professionals need to offer leadership in protecting and conserving the environment through the transformation of institutional arrangements and deployment of knowledge to deal with any negative environmental consequences. At the same time, social workers are equally concerned with how these consequences have different effects on people, especially those who are vulnerable and marginalized. They can engage in preparing communities and institutions to anticipate the future risks. This work performance requires direct practice with communities who may be left out or negatively impacted by economic progress, strengthening and supporting their demands for justice, advocacy and action related to their rights, building alliances and networks and engaging in strengthening institutional arrangements. The negative consequences of growth could be seen in unhealthy conditions of living, less or no availability of clean drinking water, sanitation facilities and polluted environments; all of

which also have impacts on the health and well-being of the people and the planet.

Such vulnerable and marginalized populations include those who are traditionally seen as “lower” in the social hierarchy, such as the caste system in India. The various attempts of the State towards development threaten the habitats and livelihoods of the indigenous communities (who are referred to as ‘Tribal’ in official parlance and prefer to be referred to as ‘Adivasi’ meaning ‘indigenous’), that are dependent on forests, which results in ecological and social injustices. The consequence of development projects has been to capture the ‘resource rich’ areas for exploitation of their mineral wealth, especially in the central regions of India, leading to eviction of the local and Indigenous communities or endangerment of their lives if they remain. This has led to numerous struggles aimed at saving the environment from undue exploitation and polluting the water and soil systems, as well as ensuring social justice in the form of fair compensation and rehabilitation to the marginalized communities.

There has been a strong tradition of social justice movements working in tandem with environmental movements in India as the poor have typically faced the brunt of the mega-development projects that have had little concern for the well-being of the locally impacted communities. The case of Gandhamur village in Kerala very well illustrates the challenges of organising for environmental justice, with active local community participation, for shutting down a factory which is polluting the local ecosystem, including its waters (Powers, Willet, Mathias & Hayward, 2018).⁹ The mineral rich areas of the country, that also have a high concentration of Adivasi groups, have seen many such extractive experiences that played havoc with their lives and living. There have been strong resistance movements taking action against some of the projects that threaten the sustainable livelihoods and habitat of people in these areas. An example is the many struggles against hydropower projects across the country such as [Narmada Bachao Andolan](#),¹⁰ that have led to tremendous loss of land and livelihoods of the marginalised groups, due to massive deforestation and the subsequent impact on the cultural life of these

groups. [Forced evictions from project areas](#)¹¹ and resettling of residents in new habitats that are not in tune with their previous livelihoods creates negative consequences as they may not possess the cultural capital to thrive in their new living situation. In addition, they may be grieving from disconnection from place, physically, psychologically/spiritually and socially, because of the loss of community ties and place attachment disruption (Brennan, Jones and Bender, 2017).¹² Further environmental injustices cannot be excluded from social group identity, as the socially marginalized also suffer from poor environment and little care for their environment. This calls for including 'voices and values' of such groups to counter the negative effects of environmental injustice. Forced to respond to the various advocacy and action groups for environmental protection, as well as the human rights violations of the project affected, a number of progressive laws have been passed in India in recent years. These pertain to rights to fair compensation and transparency to be ensured to the land acquired in the [Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013](#)¹³ and the Scheduled Tribes and other Traditional Forest Dwellers Act, also known as [The Scheduled Tribes and Other Forest Dwellers \(Recognition of Rights\) Act, 2006](#).¹⁴

Adivasi Meaning and Location

The [Adivasi](#)¹⁵ (*meaning original inhabitant*) communities in India (largely corresponding to the official term Scheduled Tribes (ST)), have distinct identities, languages, cultures and social structures. There is vast diversity between these communities linked to the place of their dwelling, cultural practices and livelihood practices. Since this lesson is geared to understanding the provisions of Forest Rights Act of 2006, we will be referring to these groups as Adivasi or Scheduled Tribe or STs (as this is the official term used by the Government, in particular reference to the Rights to Forest, which are dealt with under the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India (this will be used interchangeably with Tribal and Adivasi).

Tribal communities in India are mainly located in the central and north east region of India. They constitute about [8.6% of the Indian Population](#)¹⁶ and [live in about 15% of the country's area](#),¹⁷ in various ecological and geo-climatic conditions ranging from plains and forests to hills. More than half of the Scheduled Tribe population is concentrated in Central India (i.e., Madhya Pradesh (14.69%), Chhattisgarh (7.5%), Jharkhand (8.29%), Andhra Pradesh (5.7%), Maharashtra (10.08%), Orissa (9.2%), Gujarat (8.55%) and Rajasthan (8.86%)). The other distinct area is the [North East](#)¹⁸ (Assam, Nagaland, Mizoram, Manipur, Meghalaya, Tripura, Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh). The territories inhabited by tribes are not restricted to state or union territory boundaries as several tribes are found residing across five to six states. There are also [tribal groups whose populations are distributed](#)¹⁸ across international boundaries such as tribes in Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim, Nagaland, Manipur, Meghalaya and Mizoram which have fellow tribal people in China (including Tibet), Bhutan, Myanmar and Bangladesh.

Adivasi Relationships with Forest Lands

Many of the *Adivasi* show a high inter-dependence on forests for their well-being and livelihoods. Their practices are not from a development model, yet already were sustainable as they embrace eco-centric worldviews, caring for the land that they are part of, and preserving it for generations to come. Some ways that they benefited from the land, in non-economic and economic terms include collection of minor forest produce, hunting and gathering. Some practice shifting-cultivation and others are artisans, pastoralists or nomadic herders. Traditional occupations of Adivasai may range from honey-collection to hunting small animals to engaging in metal-work and rope-making. A large number of forest-based communities are dependent on agriculture and are either agriculturalists or agricultural labourers. Forests are also food sources and provide a variety of fruits, flowers, small game, and tubers. They are also sourced for house building, for practicing traditional art and crafts

and provide an important income sources through the sale of firewood, leaf plates, fruits, some medicinal herbs and roots.

In addition, most tribal communities have a 'sacred' relation with the forest lands, and for some, it can be said they commune with and/or 'worship' nature. The land rights structure in the tribal societies is different from the rest of the society. There are no individual rights of possession of a piece of land, instead the community rights they have regarding the land depend upon the usage and not the proprietary rights. Hence, they may fail to get compensation under the provisions of the Land Acquisition Act 1894, because they did not possess any legal documents to prove their ownership rights for the land they use as dwelling places and sources of livelihood. While this archaic act was amended in 2013, the rights of the Adivasi communities have always been in question.

In order to understand the present experiences of the Adivasi people, one must look at the history of rights around land usage, and specifically forest usage in India. This illustrates the impact that historical policy decisions have on current environmental injustices.

Historical Land Rights

Historically, forests had been utilised by tribal communities and their rights were respected until the colonial powers unleashed a wave of administrative and legal control over forests and saw them as significant to their project of colonial expansion and profit. The 1865 Forest Act was made to regulate forest exploitation, management and preservation. This also led to changes in the socially regulated practices of the forest usage and collection of forest produce by the local communities. The passage of the Forest Act in 1878 by the government of India, further consolidated the control over forests. Forests were divided into (1) reserved forests, (2) protected forests, and (3) village forests. With these laws, the usage of forests by communities changed from management primarily through adherence to social norms to management by governmental control. Persons were to be notified to record their claims over land and forest produce in the proposed reserved and protected forests. Some

provisions were also made for private forests. Timber duty was imposed and communities were restricted in their usage through grant of permitted development rights. [Certain acts were declared as forest offences](#)¹⁹ and imprisonment and fines were also prescribed for these. Trespassing and pasturing of cattle were prohibited in these forests or the communities had to seek special permission to do so. At the same time, [government control over forests was directed at exploiting the forests](#)²⁰ for commercial purposes and special management of the forests was introduced including planting of species that had high economic value. Community control over forests was thus completely reduced. This led to struggles over the rights of communities over forests.

Criminality was attached to the act of 'traditional dependence' at the same time large tracts of forests were exploited for timber. This was followed by the National Forest Policy of 1894, which reiterated the regulation of rights and restriction of privileges of 'users' in forest areas for the public good; the Land Acquisition Act of 1894, which permits compulsory acquisition of land for a 'public purpose'; and the 1927 Indian Forest Act, which remains the main legal basis for depriving forest dwellers of their user rights to forest resources. The Indian Forest Act 1927 derailed the customary rights and forest management systems practiced by local/tribal communities by declaring forests as state property for commercial exploitation of timber. Forest settlement officers were appointed to resolve disputes arising out of conflicts between communities and the state with negative consequences for the former. The tussle between the forest department and the communities continues to this day. Under the Indian Forest Act many forested areas were declared government forests without proper scrutiny as to who lived in these. For example, 82% of Madhya Pradesh forest blocks and 40% of Orissa's reserved forests were never surveyed and hence the communities (usually indigenous tribes) who lived in them and other communities who depended on the forests were seen as committing offences under the Act.

Present Times: State, Development Agenda and the Rights of the People

Development projects have eroded the food and livelihood security of the Adivasi communities. Displacement and forced migration has led to an increase in the number of Adivasis as contract labourers in the construction industry and as participants in the care economy in urban areas. A large majority of the Adivasi population works in natural resource based economic production which belongs to the primary sector of the [Indian Economy](#).²¹ GDP composition is usually seen as consisting of three sectors- the primary sector of agriculture and allied activities; the secondary sector consisting of mining and industrial production; and the tertiary sector consisting of services such as transport, communication, health and education).

[Karat and Rawal](#)²² point out that the proportion of rural Adivasi households not owning any land (including homestead land) increased from 16% of all Adivasi households in 1987-88 to 24% in 2011-12. This they attribute to the development agenda and neo-liberal economic approaches followed by the state. They also share that while the work participation rates were higher for this group compared to other social groups, there has been a decrease in the number of cultivators (owning land and working on it) with concomitant increase in the number of wage workers. Thus, between 2001 and 2011 there has been a decline in the proportion of male cultivators by about 9.5% whereas for women this decline was 11.3 %. This decline they attribute to the dispossession of land due to mega development projects. The proportion of agricultural workers in the same period increased by 8.3% for men and 9.4% for women. Further their analysis of the National Sample Survey (2009–10) reveals that, 55 per cent of rural male Adivasi workers and 59 per cent of rural female Adivasi workers in the age-group 15–60 years worked as casual wage labourers.

These proportions for Adivasis were considerably higher than the corresponding proportions for the population as a whole. There is an increase in the number of Adivasi working as labourers compared to previous years. The development agenda of the government(s)

continues to displace and dispossess tribal members/communities through the easing of the restrictions related to environmental clearances for mining and mega projects of hydropower, thermal power or highway projects. There have also been [amendments](#)²³ to the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in the Land Acquisition and Resettlement Rehabilitation Act 2013 that have made it easier for the land of Adivasi and other communities to be acquired. This Act required that development projects obtain 80% consent from the [Gram Sabha](#)²⁴ (a village level body which consists of all adult members in the village that takes decisions in its general assembly) in order to move forward. However, these progressive laws for compensation and participatory decision making have been eroded. For example, ordinances and amendments to the Land Acquisition Resettlement Rehabilitation Act were made in 2015 that excluded some development projects, such as for projects that have national significance, from following the requirements of tribal permission/engagement. Instead, ease of doing business, particularly in the states of Jharkhand and Chattisgarh, is being aggressively promoted. In fact there have been a number of Memorandum Of Understandings (MOUs), 121 and 74 respectively, with various state players as of 2014 in the States of Jharkhand and Chattisgarh.²⁵ These MOUs have required environmental clearances to be given to permit the use of forest land for mining, setting up of industries or large infrastructure projects. The [extent of forest land use change approved](#)²⁶ for mining projects in case of Jharkhand and Chattisgarh is approximately 67% of the total land converted for such purposes between the years 2005-16.

This continued loss of land due to displacement is not compensated. As previously stated, lack of proper legal recognition of Adivasis over the forest land and hill tracts compounds the problem, when it comes to the question of compensation. Displacement leads to disruption in family life, psychological and/or spiritual distress, food insecurity, and loss of social networks because of a lack of social relations outside the closely-knit, kin-centered society.

Post-independence India's push towards its development has meant exploitation of the mineral wealth, of which 45% is located in the Adivasi regions, and coal reserves, 90% of which are located in these areas. In fact there has been mention of how [the Adivasi is faced with a paradox of a very resource rich land, but poor well-being](#).²⁷ The massive and aggressive push towards this development agenda was accelerated by the economic liberalisation policy that led to the entry of private corporations into these areas. Resistance of Adivasi communities as in the case of Niyamgiri Hills led to [Supreme Court Judgement 2013](#)²⁸ that ruled in favour of these communities to decide on these matters through their traditional local governance systems which are in complete harmony with the [Fifth Schedule](#)²⁹ of the Indian Constitution which gives governance rights to the people.

The connotation of the word 'scheduled' comes from an Act of 1874 which recognized the Adivasi (tribal) communities in India during the colonial times. This legacy continued after India's Independence. There are two scheduled areas one being covered under Fifth Schedule and the other being covered by Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India vested in Article 244(1) and 244 (2) respectively. The criteria for declaring any area as scheduled area under Fifth Schedule are the following

- Preponderance of tribal (Adivasi) population,
- Compactness and reasonable size of the area,
- A viable administrative entity such as a district, block or taluk, and
- Economic backwardness of the area as compared to the neighboring areas.

Typically, these regions are marked by poor physical and social infrastructure, deprivation, widespread poverty, poor health and educational status. Further these communities suffer exploitation and oppression by traders and money lenders associated with a lack of an effective and sensitive civil administration and large-scale displacement of Adivasi (tribal) people for development projects (MOTA, 2014). The very laws and rules that are supposed to protect the Adivasi (tribal) communities are found more in breach rather than

practice. Protests by Adivasi(tribal) communities are being met with violence by the State's paramilitary and the private security staff of the corporations leading to left wing extremism (MOTA, 2014). It has been reported that of the 83 districts in 9 states (Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Odisha, Bihar, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh) which are affected by left wing extremism, 42 fall within the 6 states with scheduled districts (districts which come under the fifth schedule of the constitution).

These are the realities being experienced even as the Constitution of India provides for the safeguarding of democratic rights in ensuring protection to local governance systems through Fifth schedule and the [Provisions of the Panchayats \(Extension to the Scheduled Areas\) Act, 1996](#).³⁰

Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006³¹

The practice of state control has continued with various policies after independence where forests are seen to be used for national interests and exploitation of mineral resources. The post-colonial Indian state reinforced centralized control of forests with its National Forest Policy of 1952, which focused on protecting forest resources, while commercially exploiting minor forest produce (MFP), and the Forest Conservation Act of 1980, which placed all forests under the control of the central government. It also [continued utilising other colonial land acquisition](#) laws for the 'public good' in the name of development.¹⁹ The [Forest Policy of 1988 further entrenched](#)³²this position with protection, conservation and management of forests. It is this historical injustice that was sought to be set right through the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers Act (Recognition of Forests Rights), commonly known as the Forest Rights Act (FRA) of 2006.

Forest Rights are the rights to the forest with respect to land rights, usage rights and rights to protect and conserve the forest. The forests have been the dwelling places of Adivasi communities in India and the relationship that these communities have with the forests is that of

eneration, as Mother Earth, and of protecting and conserving it. Within these forest dwelling communities, [there is no question of treating it as simply a resource](#)³³, nor seeking its exploitation. Communities other than the Adivasi groups are also dependent on the forests for various usages such as grazing, fuel wood, food, medicines and fodder. Forests are also used as recreation points or assemblage points for people to celebrate community festivals. Some places within the forest have sacred spaces for community worship. Forests also afford the collection of minor forest produce like leaves, fruits and roots which have a great significance in the life of a forest dweller.

What does the FRA (2006) do:

- Grants legal recognition to the rights of traditional forest dwelling communities, partially correcting the injustice caused by the forest laws.
- Makes a beginning towards giving communities and the public a voice in forest and wildlife conservation
- 3 Types of Rights are ensured under the ACT – land rights, usage rights, and management rights.

The FRA, while not granting rights to the forests themselves, is a welcome piece of legislation, when implemented can aid significantly in preserving and protecting forests and forest dependent communities in India.

Application:

Exercise 1: Significance of Forests

Instructions: After reading the above, the reader should have a fairly rough idea on forests, Adivasi inter-dependence on forests and how their rights are contravened. Taking this further let us discuss the significance of forests. Please complete the following worksheet in preparation of a group discussion. First, write down your perceptions regarding forests---speaking from your own context and speaking from your current understanding of possible Adivasi/tribal viewpoints.

Theme	Your own context (indicate your location, including urban /rural position)	Possible Adivasi Viewpoints	Ideas to Consider
Human Benefits of Forests			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Dwelling ● Living (may be for scenic beauty and utility) ● Timber (building/fuel) ● Psychological ● Spiritual (e.g., places of worship within forests) ● Ecological security ● Economic value
Human Participation in Caretaking of Forests			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Protection and conservation ● Management with laws Community practices

Exercise 2: Understanding the Significance of Forests for Adivasi Communities

Instructions: Please watch the following videos, one which connects with the traditional dependency on Forests for life and livelihood and work towards realising forest rights under FRA (2006) and the other on a forest dependent community and how it is utilising the forests to meet their various needs including food.

After watching the videos (links given below) please answer the following set of questions.

- [Forest is our Mother](#)³⁴
 - [Good Food for All](#)³⁵
 - [Hauque - The Entitlement. A Documentary on the Forest Rights Act](#)³⁶
 - [A film on Forest Rights](#)³⁷
1. What are forests sourced for by the forest dependent and dwelling communities?
 - Food sources-----
 - Livelihood sources-----
 - Medicine-----
 - Other
 2. What challenges are being faced by the Adivasi communities in accessing these?
 - Natural Changes-----
 - Laws and regulations-----
 - Administrative processes-----
 - Conflict with economic activities-----
 3. List the ways in which these challenges were overcome in realising the rights of the tribal communities.

Exercise 3: Development in Your Community

How is the development agenda of the state working in your area (e.g., big dams/mega infrastructure projects/highway building activity)? List the projects that the government in your area has undertaken with regard to this:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

From the above list specify what impacts to the environment were caused with specific instances related to contamination of water, soil and destruction of forests in at least one area (with reference to India you might also take the support from India Environmental portal for this). Next, investigate whether these projects had impact on the local populations (human and other species).

Exercise 4: How Forest-based Livelihoods Could be Protected and Promoted Using the FRA, 2006

Instructions: Success stories on accessing and getting entitlement to rights can be hard to find. Hence there is a need to look into the details of the FRA, 2006 act and see how success was obtained through a concerted action on the part of the state government officials, the local village community and community organisers from civil society groups.

1. Identify key concerns that FRA 2006 tries to address. (You have already been provided some information in the above lesson, you may also consult the [brief note on the Act](#)).³⁸
2. Watch the following video
[Livelihoods : Recognition of Forest Rights in India](#)³⁹
3. Read the case study about [Mendha Lekha](#)⁴⁰
4. Explore the [interactive web modules on FRA](#)⁴¹ MOTA (Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Govt. of India website)
5. Based on your review of these four resources, please consider the following, this will be a group discussion: Following your discussion, please be prepared to report what your group discussed. The exercise is expected to generate shared knowledge. You could also make note of and discuss:
 - a. What are the key issues in the rights to forests and protecting the environment
 - b. What is the contribution of forest communities to protecting the environment and living sustainably
 - c. What types of rights are ensured by the FRA-- individual/community/relief and development rights/management of the forests
 - d. Identify the procedures involved in obtaining rights (including the 3 tier structure for the implementation of the FRA)
 - e. What are the key challenges in the procedures for obtaining rights (community organizing- organizing community meetings at village level/formation of Forests Rights Committee (FRC)/maintaining minutes of the

meetings/collection of claim submission forms/individual and community rights/evidence for the same and claim submission process/capacity building of community and FRC members)

- f. How do we want to build the capacity of community organisers/social workers for dealing with the above issues- what ideas do you have?

Summary Notes:

Concepts and interlinks with pedagogic material

Adivasi is the term that needs to be used instead of Tribal as this is colonial coinage and has its connotations experienced. However when the FRA Act itself uses Tribal and we have a Ministry of Tribal Affairs and not Adivasi affairs. Thus wherever possible the term Adivasi will be used, except when referring to official data/documents.

History of the colonial expansion and Adivasi concerns to be shown through the Panda. J film on Hauque. This depicts the colonial history of forests in the East of India and Adivasi concerns from the state of Odisha.

Bee. V's film on Forest Rights depicts the issues related to Forest Rights in the states of Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttarakhand particularly focusing on the pastoralist communities.

The Story of Mendha Lekha (first community to be granted forest rights under FRA 2006) to be seen through the video of *Samvad* and a short write up on Mendha Lekha will be distributed as case material. From this the participants will be asked to examine some questions/central themes. Video watching in the second session could be coupled with writing/producing action statements.

Please also see the article on “Degrowth for transformational alternatives as radical social work” by Powers, M., Rambaree, K. & Peeters, J. (2019) in *Critical and Radical Social Work*, first published online 22 October. Retrieved from doi.org/10.1332/204986019X15688881497178

Other links of interest:

Foods from the Forests:

- Living Farms, Odisha's documentation work on [Forests as Food Producing Habitats](#)⁴²
- Reading from the Newsletter: [Bhagirathi Jan Samvad October 2015 issue](#)⁴³ (Hindi) produced by the Dr. Malathi from Department of Social Work. in the field project in Uttarakhand. Some issues (total 12 issues) discuss the FRA and its implementation and the significance of the forests for food and medicine. This is in local language Hindi.
- Reading from [Mendha Lekha](#) (first community to be granted forest rights under FRA)
- Reading the FRA and its Guidelines from MOTA (Ministry of Tribal Affairs GOI) and also see the [progress of FRA](#)⁴⁴
- Reading about the winning Documentary [I cannot give you my forest](#),⁴⁵ a documentary by Nandan Saxena and Kavita Bahl .
- See also [kalpavriksh.org](#)⁴⁶

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Chapter 16: SDG 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions

How can the Institution of Social Work Promote Sustainability? Practice Examples from the Spanish General Council of Social Work

By Ana Isabel Lima Fernández

Author Biography:

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Learning Outcomes:

1. To understand how social workers can help achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), especially in relation to SDG 16.
2. To explore practices examples from the Spanish General Council of Social Work aimed at meeting the SDG.

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**Editors' Degrowth Critique Summary of SDGs
By Meredith Powers & Michaela Rinkel**

Please see the Overview Chapter of this [Volume 3](#) of the edited workbook series, *Social Work Promoting Community and Environmental Sustainability*, for a more complete discussion of the ecosocial worldview and the editors' degrowth critique on the growth model, sustainable development and the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

This summary is offered not as a critique of the authors' chapter, but as a prompt to consider the chapter content in light of a call to engage in practice ***within and beyond*** the SDG framework.

Social work practice is clearly connected to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). As partners with and leaders in many communities where the work related to the SDGs occurs, we must consider our role in promoting community and environmental sustainability, ***within and beyond*** the SDGs. While we need to be well versed in the SDG language and concepts and involved in conversations and actions with global partners for the SDGs, we must maintain a critical eye on the limitations of this framework and help shift the conversation towards genuine solutions (i.e. which can be sustained in the long term). We maintain that this shift involves embracing an ecosocial worldview and taking a degrowth approach for transformational alternatives to sustainable development.

Despite the admirable idea to include sustainability (which originates in an ecosocial worldview) with development (which is based on an anthropocentric worldview) to create "sustainable development", it merely created another model which ultimately is still situated in the anthropogenic, capitalist growth economic paradigm. This growth ideology keeps perpetuating the unsustainable and unjust byproducts of growth, which cannot lead to true sustainability as injustice is inherent in this model.

This volume of the workbook series is thus, an attempt to demonstrate to the profession our relevance to the SDGs, as well as to demonstrate to the world that social work is essential to the realization of sustainability, *within and beyond* the SDGs.

Within: What social work brings to the SDGs

Working to eradicate the injustices that stem from poverty, inequality, and oppression is at the core mission of social work and encompasses each of the 17 SDGs. For example, poverty and inequality impacts overall well-being, health, and civic participation, and oppression, affecting both people and planet. When we operate *within* the current framework of the SDGs, social work promotes solutions that impact multiple SDGs at once, such as universal social protection systems, fair and ethical employment practices, democratic participation, and sustainable natural resource management.

The social work profession's unique perspectives and skill sets are sorely needed. These include our emphasis on social justice, empowerment, the strengths perspective, and the person in environment perspective (also known as people as place), along with the approach of using a systems framework. These social work perspectives help to make more evident the power dynamics that exist and highlight the ways they are changed as we work to alleviate injustices related to poverty, inequality, and oppression, often connected to environmental and ecological injustices. Working within the SDG framework which uses the "triple bottom line" of sustainable development (i.e., the advancement of people, profit, and planet) we can help bring ecological justice to the forefront. However, with an ecosocial lens we can also move beyond sustainable development to shift the conversation and create truly sustainable solutions.

Beyond: Shifting to ecosocial worldview and degrowth

By embracing the ecosocial worldview we can shift the discussion and actions around the SDGs, taking a transformative approach that offers a critical understanding that the "triple bottom line" of sustainable development is not actually possible. Competition and scarcity

undergird the growth ideology, where sustainable development is located, and in that model profit will always prevail over the aspirations of meeting the supposed competing needs of people and planet. Ultimately this framework will only serve to further perpetuate ecological injustices and power imbalances.

Degrowth involves localizing solutions and is not only about a shift in economic ideology, but in a revised society that lives cooperation, sharing the abundance, and reciprocity-based relationships among people and the planet. This revisioning necessitates identifying alternative measures of “success” which should not be wedded to mere economic gain. Within the growth ideology, our current indicators are flawed as they only measure limited aspects associated with economic growth and promote solutions which give preference to profit and primarily benefit those with power. Instead, we can adopt non-economically centered indicators of prosperity that are within the ecosocial worldview. These measures determine success within the context of the interdependent well-being of people and planet (e.g., time, relationships, health, etc.). By moving **beyond** sustainable development to degrowth as transformational alternatives, we can open up the opportunities for truly sustainable solutions.

Lesson:

Social work contributes to a comprehensive approach to human development, involving individuals and structures to be able to meet the challenges posed by life and increase welfare. It faces new and old challenges, requiring values which go beyond the logic of the neoliberal, capitalist economic growth ideology and meet the demands of the protest movements which call for action and accountability. Human and ecological well-being must be at the centre of any eco social-political interventions in the fragile balance between rights and responsibilities. The goals of one of the most important guides of the profession, which is the [*Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development \(Global Agenda\)*](#)¹, is based on

this line of thinking. In the *Global Agenda*, the third pillar is described as the promotion of environmental and community sustainability ². As a result, the guide encourages all professional organizations to promote education and practice for social sustainability, including research on the role of social work regarding natural disasters or challenges. The United Nations adopted an Agenda 2030 whose most significant pillars are the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). In the same way, social work can substantially contribute to achieve the SDGs, marking the route to the adoption of measures to eradicate poverty, protect the planet, and ensure peace and prosperity for all individuals³ and which directly relate to the principles and values of social work, which was evidenced during the celebration of [the International Social Work Day, held at the UN in 2017](#)⁴. For further information on the SDGs, [visit this link](#)⁵.

Social Sustainability is an Ethical Issue

Building sustainable communities and environments, both for current and future generations, is an ethical commitment congruent with the values of social work, such as equality and solidarity.⁶As we highlight social sustainability, we cannot abandon the Welfare State, rather, we must re-establish the right kind of relationship and responsibility of citizens and the state in a way that builds social, political, and cultural rights, and promoting the defence of human rights and social justice. While we promote the participation of the citizens and regional governments, this does not mean allocating the whole responsibility, which should rightly be assumed by the states, regarding social policies and rights assurance to the third sector and private solidarity. Thus, when talking about the promotion of sustainable communities and environments, we try to get the states and the citizens collectively involved so that they can solve the demographic challenges, the decline of natural resources, the effects of large catastrophes, and the increase of social inequalities; this is what we mean by social sustainability.

The Role of the Environment in Social Sustainability

The environment is the nature, territory, and communities where individuals live. In such environments, relationships are generated, and the subsistence mode is created. There is an interdependence, an eco-social system affecting the lifestyle and the consumption of the individuals inspired by the *green social work* concept⁷. The movement of population due to the destruction of the environment is the first reason for migration in the world and it affects more than 25 million individuals, with an estimate of reaching up to 90 million in the next 30 years⁸. Deforestation and pollution negatively affect welfare and quality of life; we all have the right to live in clean, safe, and healthy environments; it is a matter of social and environmental justice.

Human - Environment Interaction as the Purpose of Social Work

In today's world, individualism and consumption can lead to social problems due to the lack of balance among the individuals, the environment, and society. From the eco-social perspective, the adjustment and the balance between the individual and the community welfare is important and is dependent upon a healthy environment. A key contribution of social work through its methodology and intervention is the analysis and transformation of social processes ensuring the participation of individuals and affecting social sustainability. The promotion of sustainable communities and environments showcases the value of community, context, and social environment from the profession⁹, as the interaction of the individual and the lived situation is the aim of social work¹⁰, highlighting the relevance of community and clarifying the fact that sustainability is everyone's business. From a global point of view, social work can observe the intersection between individual, familiar and community contexts. In addition to this, this working method highlights the value of qualitative methodologies to better understand these complexities.

The participation of all stakeholders in the planning and development of environmental regulations and laws is essential. A way to take part is to ask ourselves a question: *How would I like my city or town to be?*

The questioning and the ability to take part in the decision-making process of the planning of these issues and of other similar ones can take place through social work with communities. A clear example is the [activity of the Department for Social Services Mejorada- Velilla in some of their social projects](#)¹¹, one of them aimed at children through the Children Participation Committees, where boys and girls plan some urban resources, choose their names, and implement an analysis and suggest an action to solve the problems of the towns, etc.

Change of Paradigm

A change of paradigm on a global level is taking place. In particular, in Europe, it is negatively affecting the Social Welfare State from the middle of the 20th century, as austerity measures are harming both citizens' and social-work related rights. At the same time, a change in the production and redistribution systems is taking place resulting in less stable employment. The austerity measures applied to the social protection systems have generated social divides which have negatively affected human development and social sustainability. In addition, the term 'sustainability' has been used to undermine social sustainability, as the term is utilized from a budgetary point of view to implement governmental social program cutbacks as an austerity measure searching for a budget balance, which therefore places a higher burden on the social responsibility of private initiatives¹². Social economy may play a very important role from a global perspective, as it regards individuals rather than capital. Social economy search for a balance between human and social development, on the one hand, and economic development⁸ on the other.

The Privileged View of Social Work

From the social work sphere, detecting any political, economic, cultural, social, and environmental changes that may take place and the way in which these affect people is relatively straightforward. As a result, we can say that social work has a privileged view of such reality. This situation can be used to investigate and analyse the underlying reasons for the social problems and to overcome the

“need-resources” dialectic discussion, also taking into consideration the important and real impacts of social policies.⁸ An example of a clear feedback is the creation and participation in the [platforms of users of Social Services](#)¹³; in Spain, the dependency platforms have been very active. They consist of elderly or handicapped individuals who depend on another helping person, and their relatives. These individuals have monitored Spanish Law 39/2006, demanding its compliance from the perspective of the users. At the same time, they have joined, together with social workers, the [orange tide](#)¹⁴ against social cutbacks of the public administrations on social policies, as a protest movement and campaign. Another example is the research implemented by the Spanish General Council of Social Work regarding the [Reports on Social Services in Spain](#)¹⁵, where one of the aims is to detect the impact of the austerity measures in social services. In each of these reports, 1400 social workers, who enjoyed a privileged perspective as they were working within the social service sector, took part.^{16,17} Some of the findings from this research offer ideas on the contributions and competencies of social work which can help the world realize the SDGs.

Contributions and Competencies of Social Work to Realize that SDGs

- Improvement of the abilities and capabilities regarding the prevention and solution of difficult situations of individuals, families, groups, minorities, and communities.
- Densification of the social capital of our neighbourhoods and cities, endorsing and promoting support and social participation networks.
- Influence in public policies aimed at social welfare of the general population and of socially disadvantaged groups by means of positive action measures.
- Generation and integration into social networks and movements which are able to listen to the citizens and channel their demands, needs, and queries to the local, regional, national, and multinational authorities.
- Intensification of the transfer processes regarding research and request applied to the improvement of the knowledge

of the social reality and their application to professional and organizational practices.

- Improvement of the organizations and institutions providing welfare services in their different systems (education, housing, social services, etc.)

Conclusions

The *Global Agenda* has helped encourage social workers to promote socially sustainable communities, an essential component in realizing the SDGs, as their attention is focused on the joint development of the community and the participation of all members, essential requirements for sustainability. To this end, social work contributes to the analysis and transformation of social processes enabling the participation of individuals and affecting social sustainability and development by means of its methodology and intervention. As well, social work analyses social problems causing human suffering and creates changes in social policies to lessen such suffering and/or to prevent it.

There are many competencies in social work to contribute to environmental and social sustainability. However, it is necessary to increase the practice and training on sustainability and environmental issues in social work, which involves a shift in paradigm that allows us to question the different power systems currently preventing it (e.g., questioning the neoliberal capitalist, growth economic ideology). It is critical that social work embrace the positive role it can play in the creative evolution of our planet, as our professional competencies promote the respect of diversity, the relevance of human-environment interactions, and how to tackle complex ecosocial problems that are being created or exacerbated by the climate crisis.

Application:

Exercise:

Instructions: A case study is presented below. Read the following case study and analyse it, either on your own or in small groups. Use the discussion questions following the case to apply the above lesson on social work in realizing the sustainable development goals.

Case: “Building Sustainable Communities” of the 13th Latin American Conference on Social Work¹⁸

The Spanish General Council of Social Work (CGTS) is a professional organization representing the profession in Spain. It works both nationally and internationally and coordinates 36 regional professional associations representing 40,000 social workers. From 1968, the Council holds a Social Work Conference every 4 years in Spain, the last one was held in October 2017 in Badajoz (Spain). During the two previous years, the scientific committee prepared the speakers and the content which was to be established and selected a motto which relates to the current affairs and challenges of social work so that the agenda is established for the next 4 years. All of this affects the training and professional development of all participating organizations, which can generate a multiplying synergy in the different organizations. To help comply with the *Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development*, the motto, “**Building Sustainable Communities,**” was chosen and, as a result, all the content and organization of the Conference relate to such topic in a cross-sectional and specific way. The specific activities have dealt with civic movements, gender, innovative approaches, common good economy, sustainability of social policies, socially sustainable cities, charity city networks, inequality and poverty, and finally, the contribution of social work to the SDGs.

Additionally, some months before, some news regarding sustainability was presented in the [media, TV, radio, and press, and were later spread by social networks.](#)¹⁹ Some of the example headers included:

- Ana Lima: "We have to understand society as an ecosystem and begin talking about eco-socialism"
- Christian Felber: “The Economy for the Common Good tries to lessen the damages of the economic system”
- Ana Lima: “The policies in slums must be based more on social workers and less on police forces”
- Sami Naïr: “Europe must implement a Marshall Plan integrating the underclass and outcasts”

In order to maintain coherence with the motto of the Conference, all used materials which were recyclable and/or made from post-consumer recycled waste, and we reused all cartons, in these ways we contributed to the protection of the environment. In addition, the participation of the local producers/vendors was taken into consideration, using production cooperatives for all supplies. Ultimately, 1,300 social workers attended the conference where a social work manifest regarding our [commitment towards sustainability and the SDGs was read and endorsed](#).²⁰

Discussion Questions:

1. Identify the themes and proposals of the *Global Agenda* dealt with in this case.
2. Identify all of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the UN and the contributions and competences of social work affected in the case study.
3. What are specific ways that social work contributes to peace, justice, and strong institutions (SDG 16)?
4. Identify other ways for social workers to build social sustainability within their universities, social work organizations, and other institutions.

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Chapter 17: SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals

The Method of Transdisciplinary Teamwork for Realizing the Sustainable Development Goals

By Priska Fleischlin

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Learning Outcomes:

1. Explore how UN Sustainable Development Goal 17: "Partnerships for the Goals" connects with social work.
2. Describe the interdependency and inter-correlation of the SDGs.
3. Identify how the SDGs operate and the local realization of it.
4. Understand transdisciplinary teamwork as a method for working on SDG 17

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**Editors' Degrowth Critique Summary of SDGs
By Meredith Powers & Michaela Rinkel**

Please see the Overview Chapter of this [Volume 3](#) of the edited workbook series, *Social Work Promoting Community and Environmental Sustainability*, for a more complete discussion of the ecosocial worldview and the editors' degrowth critique on the growth model, sustainable development and the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

This summary is offered not as a critique of the authors' chapter, but as a prompt to consider the chapter content in light of a call to engage in practice ***within and beyond*** the SDG framework.

Social work practice is clearly connected to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). As partners with and leaders in many communities where the work related to the SDGs occurs, we must consider our role in promoting community and environmental sustainability, ***within and beyond*** the SDGs. While we need to be well versed in the SDG language and concepts and involved in conversations and actions with global partners for the SDGs, we must maintain a critical eye on the limitations of this framework and help shift the conversation towards genuine solutions (i.e. which can be sustained in the long term). We maintain that this shift involves embracing an ecosocial worldview and taking a degrowth approach for transformational alternatives to sustainable development.

Despite the admirable idea to include sustainability (which originates in an ecosocial worldview) with development (which is based on an anthropocentric worldview) to create "sustainable development", it merely created another model which ultimately is still situated in the anthropogenic, capitalist growth economic paradigm. This growth ideology keeps perpetuating the unsustainable and unjust byproducts of growth, which cannot lead to true sustainability as injustice is inherent in this model.

This volume of the workbook series is thus, an attempt to demonstrate to the profession our relevance to the SDGs, as well as to demonstrate to the world that social work is essential to the realization of sustainability, *within and beyond* the SDGs.

Within: What social work brings to the SDGs

Working to eradicate the injustices that stem from poverty, inequality, and oppression is at the core mission of social work and encompasses each of the 17 SDGs. For example, poverty and inequality impacts overall well-being, health, and civic participation, and oppression, affecting both people and planet. When we operate *within* the current framework of the SDGs, social work promotes solutions that impact multiple SDGs at once, such as universal social protection systems, fair and ethical employment practices, democratic participation, and sustainable natural resource management.

The social work profession's unique perspectives and skill sets are sorely needed. These include our emphasis on social justice, empowerment, the strengths perspective, and the person in environment perspective (also known as people as place), along with the approach of using a systems framework. These social work perspectives help to make more evident the power dynamics that exist and highlight the ways they are changed as we work to alleviate injustices related to poverty, inequality, and oppression, often connected to environmental and ecological injustices. Working within the SDG framework which uses the "triple bottom line" of sustainable development (i.e., the advancement of people, profit, and planet) we can help bring ecological justice to the forefront. However, with an ecosocial lens we can also move beyond sustainable development to shift the conversation and create truly sustainable solutions.

Beyond: Shifting to ecosocial worldview and degrowth

By embracing the ecosocial worldview we can shift the discussion and actions around the SDGs, taking a transformative approach that offers a critical understanding that the "triple bottom line" of sustainable development is not actually possible. Competition and scarcity

undergird the growth ideology, where sustainable development is located, and in that model profit will always prevail over the aspirations of meeting the supposed competing needs of people and planet. Ultimately this framework will only serve to further perpetuate ecological injustices and power imbalances.

Degrowth involves localizing solutions and is not only about a shift in economic ideology, but in a revisioned society that lives cooperation, sharing the abundance, and reciprocity-based relationships among people and the planet. This revisioning necessitates identifying alternative measures of “success” which should not be wedded to mere economic gain. Within the growth ideology, our current indicators are flawed as they only measure limited aspects associated with economic growth and promote solutions which give preference to profit and primarily benefit those with power. Instead, we can adopt non-economically centered indicators of prosperity that are within the ecosocial worldview. These measures determine success within the context of the interdependent well-being of people and planet (e.g., time, relationships, health, etc.). By moving *beyond* sustainable development to degrowth as transformational alternatives, we can open up the opportunities for truly sustainable solutions.

Lesson:

This chapter explores the interdependence of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), a key concept that underscores the necessity of SDG 17: Partnership for Goals, an essential SDG that gives social workers a basis upon which to involve civil society in any social, political, economic and environmental issue. Using the [‘2030 Agenda’](#)¹ as a frame, the chapter aims to strengthen social workers’ ability to further the SDGs by sharing one particular working method, transdisciplinary teamwork, which is very applicable to SDG 17. Through transdisciplinary teamwork, the principles of the SDGs such as ‘leave no-one behind’, ‘the role of business and its public private partnership’ and ‘local implementation of the SDGs’ become feasible.

Being the UN Commissioner of the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW), the author is convinced that social workers contribute in the global efforts to reach the SDGs, and in the need for transdisciplinary teamwork. Many aspects of the SDGs are connected to the global definition of social work such as a) working with ‘those left behind’, b) working on a local level with individuals and communities, c) being accustomed to working with various other professions, and d) practicing in the arena of intercultural circumstances.

Be careful: this chapter will stimulate you to have a look outside the box, to try out new cooperative techniques and to establish sustainable solutions together with various stakeholders. It presents an idea of how to realize the SDGs on the local level by using transdisciplinarity as a working method.

Partnership for Reaching the SDGs

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) aim is ‘Transforming Our World’, as presented in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. From the beginning, the interlinkage of the SDGs and the three pillars, *social, economy and environment* have been seen as the essential elements for sustainability. Partnership among those three pillars is key, not only on a global level (see SDG 10 and 17), but also on regional, national and local levels. For example, ‘Leave no one behind’ is a foundational principle of the SDG Agenda and its realization requires partnerships involving communities and individuals. This is even more apparent over recent decades that have demonstrated that economic driven development is not environmentally or socially sustainable. Thus, the aim to transform our world will only be sustainable when it is a holistic approach. In order to achieve this, both bottom up and top down approaches have to take place simultaneously and with partners from all three pillars.

For a more detailed history of the SDGs since the 1970’s the reader is referred to Ibobor.² Prior to the SDGs, the [Millennium Goals](#)³ (2000-

2015) were established and focused on developing countries only, whereas the SDGs emphasize development on a global level. One can say that every country has become a developing country under the SDG framework, with the task to develop and enhance its own situation. Each government is handling the realization of the SDGs differently, while some seem to talk but not to act, others, such as Sweden, have already established a vertical collaboration by including civil society in the planning phases of a governmental political agenda focused on the accomplishment of these goals. Transdisciplinary work has become more important, leading representatives of governments, the business sector and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to respond to this unprecedented challenge.

UN Tools for Partnership

Since the release of the Agenda 2030 in 2015, many initiatives have emerged from various UN Agencies to support collaboration. The [UN Global Compact](#)⁴ is one example of the UN seeking to create public/private-partnerships. It encompasses over 8,000 corporate participants and 4,000 non-business participants in 170 countries. It provides information, workshops on national levels, and role models across the world. The Global Compact strengthens the realization of the SDGs on, and with the local level. For example, local small businesses create new jobs and communities can activate resources and help to increase the living standards of people. “Make global goals local business” is one of the main campaigns of the UN Global Compact.

Compared to the UN Global Compact, the [SDG Fund](#)⁵ with programs in 22 countries, supports the development of living standards and highlights the multidimensionality of poverty and the need for a holistic approach. It also highlights the need for multi-stakeholder efforts by bringing together UN agencies, governments, the private sector, civil society and academia respectively. Additionally, many guiding tools, from how to build a multi-stakeholder team, to how to evaluate processes, can be found on the website of the [UN](#)⁶, such as

the link to an informative website for how to [Localize the SDGs](#)⁷ and one that focuses more on [business](#).⁸

The International Chambers of Commerce (ICC) renamed the SDGs 'BDGs', which stands for Business Development Goals (ICC),⁹ which harbours the potential economic and therefore single-sided orientation. The integration of the business sector in the work of sustainable development has the potential to generate significant, sustainable and holistic improvements in life and therefore achieve the P's of Prosperity, Peace, Planed, People and Partnership. Although partnership with business is important, it would be wrong to concentrate on just one aspect of the three pillars of sustainability; in this case economy. Only the balance with social and ecological goals and consequently of power brings sustainability. This makes it all the more important that cooperation and the development of innovation and solutions is transdisciplinary. Knowledge of social and environmental views must be part of any intervention in business.

The Inter-correlation and Interdependency of the SDGs

Although the SDGs are written as separate goals, they are best understood as a whole. The holism that is engendered in the SDGs is apparent when you examine any particular SDG and its targets, seeing connections to many of the other SDGs. For example, let's explore SDG 1, No Poverty, and its target (objective) 1.5: *By 2030, build the resilience of the poor and those in vulnerable situations and reduce their exposure and vulnerability to climate-related extreme events and other economic, social and environmental shocks and disasters.*

The multidimensionality of poverty, overlapping health, education and living standards is part of most fields of social work. It is well documented, especially within social work, that clients with low socio-economic status often suffer more from hunger or malnutrition (SDG 2 Zero Hunger), visit the doctor less often and/or get lower quality medical support (SDG 3 Good Health and Wellbeing), may not even be able to afford to send their children to school (SDG 4 Quality Education). Additionally, considering that those with low socio-economic status tend to live in low-quality housing, SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) highlights that affordable land

and clean energy are not always available to all. As women and single parents are more often living in poverty, SDG 5 (Gender Equality), and SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) are connected to SDG 1.

The International Council for Science (ICSU) released [a report in 2017](#)¹⁰ examining the interaction between the 17 SDGs and their 169 targets. This analysis made visible the interaction and interconnection between goals which can demonstrate commonalities, but also conflicts. The ICSU divides the interactions between the SDGs into positive and negative. In their analysis of four SDGs (SDG 2, 3, 7 and 14) they identified 316 target level interactions of which 238 are positive, 66 negative and 12 neutral. Positive connections between different SDGs can be seen in relation to economic growth and spending on healthcare. When targets for economic growth are improved, in general spending on healthcare is improved. An example of a conflict was found between ending hunger via increasing agricultural food production and the goal of improving the environment on land and water. Increasing agricultural food production to end hunger without paying attention to potential land degradation at times led to harming the environment and created even more problems for the ecosystem and the humans they are trying to help with the agricultural development in the first place.⁹ Focusing on the interactions between the goals and their targets allows users to gain a more complete picture of the situation and raises consciousness about transformation as a holistic change. In 2019, during the SDGs Summit, the UN presented the Global Sustainable Development Report 2019 that explains, in detail and showcases six entrypoints.¹¹

SDG 17: Strengthen the Means of Implementation and Revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development

The interlinkages explored above make the case that partnerships are necessary to reach the global transformation envisioned in the 2030 Agenda. SDG 17 is understood as the partnership-SDG, so let's have a look at it. SDG 17 can be divided into the five target-groups: Finance, Technology, Trade, Capacity-Building and Systemic Issues; the latter includes policy and institutional coherence, multi-stakeholder

partnership and data, monitoring and accountability. Please [read them online](#)¹² to get the full picture of the targets and indicators for this goal. For the practical work that a transdisciplinary framework emphasizes and a further understanding of partnership, the following targets are most relevant:

Target 17.16: Enhance the global partnership for sustainable development, complemented by multi-stakeholder partnerships that mobilize and share knowledge, expertise, technology and financial resources, to support the achievement of the sustainable development goals in all countries, in particular developing countries
Target 17.17: Encourage and promote effective public, public-private and civil society partnerships, building on the experience and resourcing strategies of partnerships.¹²

By agreeing on the SDGs, the United Nations have shown (theoretically) their will to strengthen partnership with civil society, communities and individuals. Having attended many discussions at the UN from 2015 to 2019, much attention has been given to ‘financing the SDGs’ and the complexity of the current time and globalization that provide obstacles to the implementation of the Agenda 2030. Only a few states, such as Sweden, reported a successful adoption of the plan by involving the whole government and partners.¹³ With this, I would like to now look at a method that seems to be very appropriate for this partnering focus of the SDGs.

Transdisciplinary Teams on a Local Level

The prefix ‘trans’ stands for “beyond”, “across”, “changing thoroughly”. With the adjective ‘trans’ we signify a movement in space and time and not a stable, established position” (p 144).¹⁴ Regarding transdisciplinary, Nicolescu (2014)¹⁵ determined ‘trans’ as the vacuum between disciplines, and transdisciplinarity explores it. Before transdisciplinarity came up in the scientific community, scientists tended to see people not as a subject, a knowing person of their situation, but rather an object of their research or, an object of experiment, and something to be studied. Now, there is a branch of science that is keen to solve problems **with** those people who are

most affected by the situation in order to learn the very local situation and to find comprehensive, holistic solutions. It has been realized that it is essential to understand the context that defines the framework of the reality of people's lives in which the solutions are to be implemented (e.g., social work's person in environment), and furthermore to go beyond disciplines bringing dignity, self-esteem and building capacities among communities (e.g., social work's ethical principles).

Transdisciplinary teams are different from multidisciplinary teams. Though they share the fact that persons of different disciplines are part of the team, the function of the teams differs. Pohl and Hadorn¹⁶ explain knowledge building in practical terms using transdisciplinary perspective (TD) to denote a participatory approach that is both problem and solution-oriented. They note, knowledge is built by the whole process, end-users are always involved, and the goal of this work is to develop usable products. There are certain characteristics that must be fulfilled in order for a problem/situation to be able to benefit from a transdisciplinary perspective:

- the problem to solve shows a high complexity, meaning that it involves several themes of life.
- the diversity of view by the members of the TD team
- connecting theoretical and practical knowledge
- finding a practical and community-oriented solution

Mittelstrass¹⁷ agrees that TD is most effective in solving complex problems. He recognizes the fragmentation of the disciplines that has occurred during the last few decades leading to a narrow and simplistic view of issues. Originally, TD was a scientific research tool, but it became obvious that this principle was applicable for non-scientific problem solving. With TD, project-oriented teamwork is more effective than before and with a single-disciplinary approach¹⁷. TD cannot be understood as a new 'discipline'. TD should be seen as a methodology which needs to better establish a common understanding.¹⁸

The following are some examples of complex problems that link the SDGs, necessitating a transdisciplinary approach.

- Communities in conflict areas that want to protect their kids on the way to school
- Building a hospital in an impoverished area
- Reducing poverty in a rural area with low (or no) financial resources
- Climate change and prevention of disasters

How to Use TD

TD guides teams, especially the first time of working together. When building a team, include the appropriate representatives of all relevant parties in context. With this, one creates a so called 'hybrid team', specific to this problem. One should think out of the box and include people you might have not yet worked with, but who have expertise in this issue. Consider architects, nurses, doctors, teachers, farmers and faith-based organizations, and many others, depending on the context of the problem you want to solve. Mittelstrass¹⁹ recommends a four-step approach to using a TD perspective, which has been adapted and implemented for practical fieldwork: 1) introduce disciplinary knowledge, 2) work out the interdisciplinary understanding, 3) build transdisciplinary arguments, and 4) bring new knowledge back to each discipline.¹⁷ The author has utilized this approach several times and it has been determined to be a valuable method for TD projects, especially related to the partnerships needed for transformation through the SDGs. However, this does not rule out the possibility of long-term cooperation arising from these projects.

Step 1) Introduce Disciplinary Knowledge. Once a complex situation is identified by a stakeholder (e.g., a social worker), they could then create a short description from their assessment/point of view, and then give it to other stakeholders (including professionals from other disciplines and people affected). There are many tools in social work to analyze and describe situations, locally different, but the same in structure: for example, short descriptions of the situation, the goal (SMART formulated), how to work towards this goal and what is

necessary. It is recommendable to consult also Rinkel and her list of various tools (2017, p 275ff).¹⁸

Each stakeholder involved then has the task to share a description of the situation from their particular disciplinary perspective. By exploring these various views, the team is able to a) clarify each stakeholder's understanding of the situation b) clarify the differences and commonalities, and c) define boundaries of knowledge. In this way, the team has been formed, and aspects have been clarified on how they perceive and would approach the situation if handling it alone. Next is to help the team develop a way to approach it as a team.

Step 2) Work Out the Interdisciplinary Understanding. A TD team brings various related factors to one table with each profession or group such as social workers, local politicians, enterprises, civil society, and others representing their understanding of this case. Make sure that everyone has the same rights to speak and present. Heintel²¹ says, each TD team member brings various types of knowledge:

- Subjective knowledge: personal knowledge related to the individual actors.
- Objective knowledge: expertise, related to the topic.
- Intersubjective knowledge: shared knowledge that arises through cooperation.

In this stage, Mittelstrass¹⁹ already speaks about transdisciplinary teamwork, because knowledge building happens through the mutual construction of the project goal and necessary steps. People learn a lot from others which helps them to widen their scope.

Step 3) Build Transdisciplinary Arguments Based on the Shared Information. Knowledge building happens through the mutual construction of the project goal and necessary steps. When several disciplines address problem-solving by interacting within their paradigms, they create a new (higher) trans-knowledge. This specific

knowledge, emerging from the collaboration, is a hybrid type, designed for this specific problem. This means, it might not be adaptable for other problems that you have, but in fact, the knowledge that has been created has the impact of being sustainable and holistic. Transdisciplinary teamwork creates unique types of knowledge throughout the discursive process, promoting mutual understanding and generating new knowledge. The knowledge that is generated for a particular complex situation is designed to be useful for practice, differing from the purely theory-based knowledge by its higher practical compatibility. This communication process in transdisciplinary teams involves a shared responsibility for outcomes so that new knowledge is never from one person only, as each emerging idea was only possible due to the previous speakers and interactions.²¹

The discourse on transdisciplinarity also reveals the centrality of interaction – people have to communicate, even more when they don't know the other professions. Hence, awareness for communication processes are necessary so that misunderstandings and misinterpretation can not only be recognized, but also clarified. This will be presented in further detail below.

Step 4) Bring New Knowledge Back to Each Discipline. In the fourth step, the trans-knowledge is then reverted to the individual discipline. From the performative process, the knowledge created could then be integrated and/or expanded upon within the discipline to create generalizable theory and best practices.

Key Elements for Successful Transdisciplinary Teamwork

Communication and connectedness as key elements

The primary challenge to effective transdisciplinary teamwork is communication, such as can be seen in the clash of different (professional) cultures, and divergent languages (terminology), goals and work planning tools that are part of those cultures. Because of these challenges, despite the learning effect, misunderstandings and misinterpretations are constantly occurring. For instance, when a

lawyer and a social worker talking about their client, they use the same word, but the meaning is different, or 'environment' has another meaning for a business person than a social worker or an indigenous leader.

The performative process of building collaborative solutions, specific to the local circumstances, is based on communication. When people with different thoughts, beliefs and understandings are listening and then building on what was said by adding their own thoughts, ideas and constructions, it causes others to do the same. This is how transdisciplinary knowledge emerges. To listen and to tolerate other perspectives and also to accept that the power of the TD-team is democratically divided, can facilitate better communication.

Transdisciplinarity only arises when team members contribute and discuss their expertise which is, as seen above, sensitive. Since different professions and cultures are working together, transdisciplinary teamwork can be understood as transcultural communication. Wolfgang Welsch²², describes transcultural communication in diverse teams as not only regarding place of origin, but also including the fact that people acquire various cultural habits, leading to difference. Within TD, team members are seen as unique individuals and their differences are essential in order to create a sustainable and holistic solution. This means, for example, that different understandings of project processes are to be treated equally. An obligation can then, for example, be to respect the difference and to use it as a basis for connecting in constructive discussions, not criticism.

Awareness of the importance of understanding and interaction
Working in transdisciplinary teams differs from any other team, requiring different skills and knowledge. The following is a research-based list of considerations serving as supportive and hindering factors of TD teamwork in complex environments.²³ They are offered in order for the reader to develop their participatory and leadership skills in such a TD team environment.

- **Synchronicity:** When TD teams work together on the same thing members focus their attention on a single area, such as a prototype. This simultaneity increases mutual understanding because team members understand what others are talking about. The research has shown that those teams that understand each other better bring in new suggestions and ideas.
- **Reciprocity:** The more often different team members respond to thoughts shared by other team members, a sense of reciprocity is created and thus, a greater sense of cohesion. The teams with a higher amount of interaction could, thus, better understand, keep each other on the same page and build certain topic-specific closeness which helped them to form a flow that promoted cohesion.
- **Being present and active:** The research has shown that teams where all have shown a high level of presence with many interactions (and not monologues) have been much more efficient. What the interactive team did was not always topic related, but may also include offering positive feedback, sometimes asking or praising, even a 'hmm', but at all times signaling each other 'I have heard you'. Other teams with less interaction struggled to stay motivated and not become distracted. This resonance also has a positive impact on the team members' well-being. For example, shared laughter unites the team members and increases their presence. Laughing helps people to relax which is essential to continued concentration. Laughing also catches the attention of those who might have become distracted and it creates a personal bond when others find the same things funny. Missing resonance increases the isolation of team members. For example, if team members ask questions repeatedly and receive no answers, the questioners withdraw from the conversation.
- **Reflection:** TD team dynamics have to be reflected upon, as it is proven to build cohesion. For example, if a team remained in an unpleasant/stressful situation without

reflecting on it, it would not be possible to improve cohesion and cooperation. By explicit dialogue and reflection, (sometimes in avoidance of potential criticism) a more holistic and productive TD team dynamic can be achieved. In the research it was visible that, instead of criticism, there was a prolonged silence or evasion of another topic. This lack of openness may be linked to uncertainty. However, this evasion can be considered obstructive because it sends an unclear message to the person presenting.²³

Summary Notes:

The Sustainable Development Goals span a net over the world with the goal of achieving an all-encompassing, sustainable transformation. A transformation into a new state requires global, national, and local changes in governance (e.g., reduction/elimination of laws that impede development, corruption, etc.) as well as practical instruments to develop new solutions for society, economy, environment and science. The targets of the 17 SDGs are highly interlinked and emphasize the need for localized and transdisciplinary approaches. The four steps of Mittelstrass's transdisciplinarity, with their simplicity, offer a helpful approach that can be adapted according to local circumstances. The awareness of the key elements of successful TD of understanding and interaction in this specific working environment will help to organize and structure collaborations on the SDGs and are particularly useful for social workers to employ.

Application:

Social workers around the world use a variety of frameworks and methods, such as person in environment frameworks, individual case work models, community work, capacity building, systemic approaches and many more. One constant is that we work within the social work definition and the codes of ethics. When addressing the SDGs, social workers will often find they need to create transdisciplinary (TD) teams to create change. In this exercise, the

reader can work as an individual, but is highly encouraged to find a partner or small group to discuss their answers to the following:

Exercise 1. Understanding Social Work and the Interlinkages with the SDGs

1. Define what you understand social work to be according to your perspective.
2. Read the [International Definition of Social Work](#) as found online at the International Federation of Social Work website.²⁴
3. Compare your understanding of the practice of social work in your area to the international definition. In what ways is the practice similar to the international definition and in what ways does it differ?
4. How does this definition of social work apply to the various SDGs?

Exercise 2: Social Workers as Transdisciplinary Team Members for SDGs

Recall your work with a particular case at the micro level:

1. Describe the multifactorial situation of this client(s).
2. What interlinkage of the SDGs do you see that is related to your specific case?
3. Define a list of stakeholders to invite for a transdisciplinary project focused on addressing some of the factors you identified in the case.
4. Clarify the general goal of this project from your perspective, then invite the stakeholders to join you in clarifying their idea of the goal for the project.
5. Use the four-steps presented in the above lesson to practice utilizing a transdisciplinary team approach on one or more SDGs. Be sure to note the key elements for successful TD in the lesson above. For this exercise, you may use hypothetical or real communities. Tasks may also include:

- a. Prepare a guideline for a TD-team member, providing information about the situation.
- b. Ask them to prepare their disciplinary view on it.
- c. Prepare how to guide the team through the process and work using participatory processes.
- d. Analyze the power division among participants before, during and after the process.

Summary Notes:

The author is interested in reading about practical experiences that social worker colleagues in their different framework conditions experience by using TD. Please reach her at:

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Resources:

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Articulando Política Ambiental com Bem-Estar: Uma Proposta para o Estudo e Debate do Envolvimento de Assistentes Sociais em Serviços de Ecossistema

Por Pedro Gabriel Silva and Livia Madureira

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e impactos às escalas territorial e organizacional). Métodos mistos e análise multinível são, também, áreas de interesse.

Objectivos de aprendizagem:

- 1) Compreender as relações entre o Serviço Social e os Objectivos de Desenvolvimento Sustentável (ODS) 11: Cidades e Comunidades Sustentáveis.
- 2) Apresentar os conceitos de Serviços de Ecossistema e de Pagamentos por Serviços de Ecossistema como instrumentos de promoção dos ODS.
- 3) Reconhecer e promover a capacidade do Serviço Social em potenciar o alcance dos programas de incentivos ambientais.
- 4) Reconhecer o papel dos(as) assistentes sociais na aproximação entre políticas sociais e políticas ambientais, discutindo a inter-relação entre medidas ambientais e a promoção do bem-estar.

Lição:

Seguidamente, serão apresentados os conceitos de Serviços de Ecossistema e de Pagamentos por Serviços de Ecossistema, relacionando-os com protecção ambiental, sustentabilidade e bem-estar. O papel que os(as) assistentes sociais podem desempenhar na sua promoção e implementação será, igualmente, objecto de atenção, especialmente tendo em consideração o ODS 11: Cidades e Comunidades Sustentáveis. Para esse efeito, recorrer-se-á a um caso de estudo em torno de um esquema de Pagamentos por Serviços de Ecossistema numa área de paisagem protegida em Portugal. Este caso servirá de pano de fundo para analisar e discutir as possibilidades e os constrangimentos associados à participação de assistentes sociais na promoção e valorização dos Serviços de Ecossistema. A partir dos conceitos introduzidos e do caso apresentado, pedir-se-á aos participantes que desenvolvam um trabalho de grupo composto por quatro etapas: 1) seleccionar um programa de valorização de Serviços de Ecossistema, 2) analisar esse programa, 3) fazer uma apresentação

em torno do programa estudado, 4) dinamizar uma discussão entre grupos.

Caso de estudo:

Em Junho de 2017, Portugal foi confrontado com as notícias de dezenas mortes ocorridas em escassas horas, vítimas de incêndios florestais. Mais tarde, veio-se a confirmar terem perecido 64 pessoas.

¹ O flagelo dos incêndios florestais não era, propriamente, novidade neste canto austral da Europa. Efectivamente, os incêndios florestais têm devastado, cronicamente, Portugal continental nas últimas décadas, aportando enormes impactos ambientais e económicos, sobretudo nos territórios rurais, já de si afectados pelo declínio a demográfico. Quatro meses depois, em pleno Outubro, Portugal atravessava, ainda, um período de seca severa, registando temperaturas anormalmente elevadas para época. Foi sob tais circunstâncias que o país sofreu um número sem precedentes de incêndios florestais que causaram mais 45 mortos em apenas 24 horas. Um pouco por todo o país, movimentos de solidariedade emergiram e assistentes sociais de organismos públicos e ONGs uniram-se aos esforços de apoio de emergência nas diversas frentes, actuando, sobretudo, em acções de apoio psicossocial e respostas de ajuda imediata associada à distribuição de bens recolhidos através de movimentos de solidariedade e caridade. Apesar de a tragédia ter revelado a importância e a capacidade dos(as) assistentes sociais e instituições públicas e privadas para intervir em situações de emergência pós-desastre, também mostrou o quão distantes os(as) assistentes sociais ainda se encontram da actuação a nível de planeamento e prevenção, assim como da participação na planificação e promoção de programas ambientais e práticas sustentáveis.

O Serviço Social como parceiro multidisciplinar

A discussão travada nos fóruns públicos após os eventos catastróficos de 2017, trouxe para uma audiência mais alargada o conceito de Serviços de Ecossistema (SE). Com ele, veio o princípio de que a redução do risco de incêndio e a sua prevenção estão directamente relacionados com a capacidade para promover, valorizar e compensar

os agentes responsáveis por, localmente, contribuir para e manter a biodiversidade e o equilíbrio ecológico. Como forma de promover os SE, são usados um conjunto de políticas, medidas e dispositivos, entre os quais se incluem os Pagamentos por Serviços de Ecossistema (PSE). Quer o estudo e a valoração dos SE, quer o desenho e implementação dos PSE convocam uma variedade de disciplinas (p. ex., engenharia ambiental, direito, engenharia agrária, sociologia, economia, história, etc.), tornando a abordagem dos SE um campo verdadeiramente transdisciplinar.² Haverá espaço para os(as) assistentes sociais na promoção dos SE?

Na nossa perspectiva, a resposta é afirmativa. Os profissionais de Serviço Social podem e devem ter um papel na promoção dos SE. Para que tal suceda, é necessário aumentar a capacidade e possibilidades de integração destes(as) profissionais em equipas multidisciplinares que trabalham no campo da protecção ambiental, na mitigação e/ou prevenção de danos ambientais, na recuperação ecológica e bem-estar social. Afinal, trata-se de dimensões de actuação conformes ao ODS 11 (com a finalidade de tornar mais inclusivas, seguras, resilientes e sustentáveis as cidades e demais contextos de assentamento humano).

Serviços de Ecossistema (SE) e Pagamentos por Serviços de Ecossistema (PSE)

Resumidamente, por SE entende-se os benefícios que as pessoas podem ter da natureza,³ ou, de acordo com o relatório TEEB,⁴ os SE representam os benefícios directos, indirectos e passivos que os humanos obtêm dos ecossistemas e que são, por sua vez, fundamentais para o seu bem-estar. Nos termos do Millennium Ecosystem Assessment,³ podem ser identificadas quatro grandes categorias de serviços: (i) suporte (são aqueles que fornecem as infraestruturas vitais para funcionamento dos ecossistemas); (ii) regulação (aqueles que contribuem para manter e regular as funções ecológicas básicas como a erosão, os ciclos hídricos, a polinização, etc.); (iii) provisionamento (obtidos dos ecossistemas naturais e semi-naturais ligados à produção bens como comida, matérias primas ou água); e (iv) culturais (que permitem actividades desportivas, de lazer

e artísticas).⁵ Como se pode verificar, os SE estão relacionados com a provisão de uma série de serviços que contribuem, directa ou indirectamente, para o bem-estar, não apenas de quem vive nas zonas onde são produzidos, mas, também, para quem habita em locais mais distantes.³³ Deste modo, a provisão de SE relaciona-se com diversos ODS, incluindo o 11º, objecto de atenção do volume que acolhe este texto. Para termos uma ideia mais clara dessa relação, basta pensar no contributo dos SE para assegurar o fornecimento de água potável aos centros urbanos,^{29 30} para reduzir as emissões de CO² e melhorar a qualidade do ar,³¹ para preservar a estabilidade dos solos e limitar o risco de erosão e aluimentos³², para proporcionar processos naturais de gestão de resíduos,³⁴ para proporcionar actividades de lazer e desporto em contextos não poluídos,³⁵ entre outros exemplos.

Ao contribuírem para a preservação da biodiversidade e conservação de valores naturais, os SE acabam por promover o bem-estar humano, não só de quem está directamente relacionado com a sua provisão, como também de todos os que indirectamente acabam por beneficiar das mais-valias proporcionadas por esses SE. Percebe-se, assim, que a biodiversidade é fundamental para o funcionamento e provisão de SE.⁶ Considerando a nossa dependência destes serviços (como, por exemplo, no acesso a água potável, na disponibilidade de ar limpo, no controlo da poluição, na redução dos riscos de incêndio ou de cheia), a biodiversidade acaba por condicionar o bem-estar, a qualidade de vida e a saúde humanos.⁷ É por esse motivo que os SE têm um vasto alcance e impacto sociais, contribuindo, inclusive, para contrariar os efeitos do declínio demográfico e para promover a justiça ambiental.⁸ De igual modo, os esquemas de pagamentos por estes serviços ecológicos podem representar um importante instrumento de promoção dos SE e uma mais equilibrada e inclusiva distribuição dos incentivos pelos diversos actores e *stakeholders* locais⁹. Elaborados, tipicamente, como esquemas de mercado, os PSE variam no formato e no princípio de implementação, podendo constituir-se através de incentivos financeiros directos a quem assegura determinados SE (por exemplo, limpeza de florestas, manutenção de

pastagens, reposição de espécies florestais) ou através de compensações indirectas (por exemplo, apoios à eco-certificação, cobrança de entradas em zonas protegidas)⁹. Diga-se, de passagem, que este entroncar dos SE nos sistemas de mercado, no marco dos processos de globalização financeira e mercantilização da natureza contemporâneos tem sido objecto de escrutínio crítico, em particular a partir das abordagens provenientes da ecologia política.^{10 11} O formato dos esquemas de pagamento por SE depende, substancialmente, do tipo de direitos de propriedade aplicáveis e de quem paga, ou, também, da disponibilidade “de alguém” para pagar. Os esquemas agro-ambientais comuns na União Europeia são um tipo de pagamento por SE através dos quais os fornecedores de SE (agricultores e proprietários florestais) são compensados pelo seu contributo para a provisão de SE. Por exemplo, os agricultores podem assegurar um SE quando utilizam métodos de mobilização dos solos que limitem o risco de erosão, ou substituindo agro-químicos por produtos com impacto ecológico reduzido ou neutro. No caso dos proprietários florestais, estes podem assegurar um SE quando privilegiam a reflorestação usando espécies autóctones em vez do monocultivo intensivo. Contudo, o recurso a esquemas de pagamento por SE ultrapassa os propósitos de conservação ecológica, visando, igualmente, fins socio-culturais e a segurança alimentar e, quando devidamente articulados com políticas de bem-estar, podem actuar como dispositivos de inclusão social.

Apesar de os esquemas de Pagamento por Serviços de Ecossistema não serem pensados, inicialmente, para responder às necessidades de públicos com menos recursos económicos ou para funcionar como instrumentos de combate à pobreza, podem, no entanto, contribuir para esses objectivos. Tomemos, por exemplo, os casos de pequenos agricultores ou de comunidades indígenas como possíveis beneficiários de um esquema de Pagamento por Serviços de Ecossistema. Aqui, estes dispositivos podem actuar, combinadamente, como instrumento de política social e ambiental, assegurando incentivos pecuniários adicionais a grupos economicamente menos afluentes cujo contributo como proviões

de SE não é, habitualmente, reconhecido. Da mesma maneira, os esquemas de Pagamentos por Serviços de Ecossistema podem evidenciar o papel dos *stakeholders* locais, quer individuais, quer institucionais, como guardiães do território, contribuindo para reconhecer a sua agência na gestão dos recursos naturais. Um bom exemplo de tal é-nos dado por Nhapi e Mathende no primeiro volume da série da IFSW - *Promoting Community and Environmental Sustainability*¹².

Considerando que os desequilíbrios ecológicos acabam por perturbar as relações sociais, instigam desigualdades no acesso aos e fruição dos recursos e, necessariamente, conflitualidade social, é legítimo pensar que, ao promover práticas sustentáveis e compensação pelos serviços associados à preservação da biodiversidade e valores ecológicos, os esquemas de Pagamentos por Serviços de Ecossistema possam contribuir para a justiça ambiental e social¹³. Este aspecto não deve ser negligenciado, considerando que a perda de qualidade do ambiente tem mais impacto nas populações já de si fragilizadas no quadro da economia de mercado (p. 13)¹⁴. Relembra-se, a este propósito, que a relação entre pobreza e crise ambiental não é um assunto novo no Serviço Social internacional, registando-se um acumular de referências nas últimas décadas^{15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24}.

De seguida, apresenta-se um esquema de Pagamentos por Serviços de Ecossistema numa área protegida de Portugal, em concreto, no Parque Natural da Serra da Estrela (PNSE). Trata-se de um caso particularmente representativo de um esquema de incentivos agroambientais apostado na promoção da conservação da natureza e biodiversidade através do apoio a práticas produtivas tradicionais e amigas do ambiente e a investimentos não produtivos (aqueles cujo objectivo imediato não é a produção agrícola, florestal ou pecuária, por exemplo, o apoio à reconstrução e manutenção de muros antigos, recuperação de velhos edifícios agrícolas, enfim, de infraestruturas consideradas parte inalienável da paisagem agro-pastoril e florestal tradicional). O caso em análise serve o fito de discutir como o Serviço Social pode contribuir para (i) promover a eficácia e alcance dos esquemas de Pagamentos por Serviços de Ecossistema, (ii) a

articulação entre políticas sociais e políticas ambientais e (iii) ampliar o carácter multidisciplinar da abordagem dos SE.

O caso de estudo português

O caso a abordar remete para um programa de incentivos agroambientais em áreas de paisagem protegida adoptado em Portugal entre 2007 e 2014 e financiado pela União Europeia: Iniciativas Territoriais Integradas (ITI). Neste caso em concreto, observaremos as ITI implementadas no Parque Natural da Serra da Estrela (PNSE)²⁵. Apesar de não ter sido desenhado como um instrumento de Pagamentos por Serviços de Ecossistema, acabou por configurar muitos dos princípios que norteiam esses esquemas, ao providenciar incentivos económicos e consultoria técnica a uma variedade de provedores locais de SE (associações de baldios e de produtores agropecuários e florestais e proprietários rurais). Para aderir ao programa, aos beneficiários era requerido que obedecessem a um conjunto de práticas de produção e gestão dos recursos baseados na promoção da biodiversidade e conservação de valores ecológicos. O inventário de medidas suportadas pelo programa ITI no PNSE incluía, entre outras, a manutenção de pastagens, a protecção de espécies florestais e flora autóctones, a reconstrução de antigos muros ao longo dos caminhos rurais e de montanha, a preservação de galerias ripárias ou a manutenção de sistemas de irrigação tradicionais²⁷. O programa ITI era administrado no PNSE através de uma estrutura técnica descentralizada cujo objectivo principal passava por assegurar a gestão e monitorização da implementação das medidas localmente. Essa Estrutura Local de Apoio (ELA), como era designada, juntou organizações sectoriais agrárias e florestais, representantes de uma organização ambiental e quadros do Ministério da Agricultura e Pescas e do Instituto Nacional de Conservação da Natureza e Florestas. A actuação da ELA acabou por se dirigir mais para a fiscalização das ITI do que para alargar a difusão do programa a um leque mais variado de beneficiários⁵. Simultaneamente, ao não consentir uma mais diversificada representação de *stakeholders* na sua estrutura, ao não incluir outros actores sociais e profissionais e organismos e ao privilegiar um perfil

de representação estritamente técnico, esta estrutura-chave de governança local não foi capaz de proporcionar processos de participação *bottom-up*.

Devido às debilidades associadas ao perfil estritamente técnico, actuação *top-down* e relativa baixa disseminação junto do universo de potenciais beneficiários, as ITI do PNSE não conseguiram produzir um impacto social e económico mais amplo. Em parte, tal deveu-se ao facto de não terem sido capazes de atrair outros beneficiários que não os habituais concorrentes aos subsídios agroambientais. Deste modo, um número alargado de indivíduos com menor capital social e mais baixos níveis de literacia poderiam ter beneficiado do programa. Considerando que as ITI contemplavam a possibilidade de estender os incentivos a investimentos não-produtivos, o leque de potenciais beneficiários abrangia muita gente que se encontrava ligada à actividade produtiva agrária e/ou florestal, bastando ser proprietário de parcelas nas zonas de implementação do programa. Não obstante tal, as ITI no PNSE foram primordial, se não propositadamente, divulgadas junto das associações de produtores agrícolas e florestais, deixando de fora os mais idosos pequenos proprietários. Ora, trata-se de uma população de pensionistas que, no conjunto, detém consideráveis áreas agrícolas e floresta e não possuem os necessários recursos financeiros para assegurar a sua manutenção. Convém não esquecer que um dos factores que agravam o risco de incêndio florestal e rural está relacionado com a acumulação de material combustível fruto da incipiente ou inexistente limpeza da floresta. Assim, conseqüente com um mais alargado envolvimento de pequenos proprietários, muitos deles com menos recursos económicos (referenciados e conhecidos dos serviços de acção social locais), o programa das ITI no PNSE poderia ter contribuído ainda mais para reduzir o risco de incêndio florestal ao mesmo tempo que promovia os rendimentos da propriedade (p. exemplo, através da venda de biomassa para produção de energia, da recolha e venda de frutos de casca rija e cogumelos).

Esta crítica não serve para minorizar as vantagens implícitas do programa ITI, sobretudo no que se refere ao seu papel enquanto

potencial promotor de SE, biodiversidade e sustentabilidade ambiental. Contudo, é razoável argumentar que, no PNSE, o programa acabou por não atingir plenamente esses objectivos. Considerando as já referidas dificuldades em chegar a públicos mais alargados e diferenciados, quiçá as ITI do PNSE teriam beneficiado da integração de outros profissionais na sua estrutura técnica, ou então, que tivessem sido estabelecidas parcerias entre a ELA e outros profissionais a operar em diversas organizações regionais e locais com acesso directo às comunidades, como é o caso dos(as) assistentes sociais. Possivelmente, o programa teria beneficiado e atingido melhores resultados caso esses(as) profissionais nele tivessem participado, fosse colaborando na planificação e desenho das medidas, fosse trabalhando na afinação do dispositivo de governança, sobretudo no que se relaciona com o ajustamento das ITI às redes locais socioinstitucionais, reforçando as possibilidades de parcerias formais e informais. Também, ao nível local, os(as) assistentes sociais poderiam ter sido chamados(as) para participar na implementação do programa (por exemplo, integrando a ELA e/ou cooperando na disseminação e divulgação do programa, fazendo uso das suas competências e posicionamento como profissionais no terreno e em serviços municipais e do Estado). Neste sentido, os(as) assistentes sociais poderiam ter contribuído, entre outros, para melhorar a articulação entre as ajudas agroambientais e outros dispositivos de apoio social, para mediar conflitos e falhas de comunicação entre agentes técnicos e beneficiários, para acompanhar a monitorização do programa no terreno.

Como podem os(as) assistentes sociais participar na implementação de programas agroambientais como as ITI? Em Portugal, como em muitos outros países, os(as) profissionais de Serviço Social trabalham em diferentes escalas territoriais: municípios, estruturas locais, regionais e centrais da Segurança Social, organizações do 3º sector, associações intermunicipais e, em alguns casos, em associações de desenvolvimento local e em movimentos e associações de base. Além disso, há assistentes sociais integrados em estruturas intersectoriais e interinstitucionais, destacando-se o seu papel na promoção de

parcerias entre as esferas pública e privada e na organização de redes locais de serviços e projectos de apoio social. Também não devemos menosprezar o facto de os(as) assistentes sociais deterem um conjunto relevante de competências profissionais postas ao serviço de intervenções directas no terreno, planeamento estratégico, coordenação de acções de intervenção na comunidade e organização comunitária, sem esquecer o seu envolvimento no desenho, monitorização e avaliação de políticas sociais^{26 28}.

O desenho e execução de políticas ambientais também podem contar com o conhecimento experto dos(as) assistentes sociais, que, através da sua competência técnica e compreensão holística da realidade social, podem contribuir para articular protecção ambiental com propósitos sociais mais latos. O caso das ITI do PNSE põem em evidência uma vastidão de possibilidades para os(as) assistentes sociais contribuírem para esse desiderato de reunião entre política ambiental e política social. A sua participação na implementação das ITI não teria contribuído, apenas, para uma maior disseminação das medidas, também e sobretudo, poderia ter contribuído para ligar o programa à melhoria das condições de bem-estar de parte da população do território em que foi implementado. Como já se mencionou, entre os potenciais beneficiários das ITI no PNSE encontravam-se os pequenos proprietários rurais idosos desprovidos de meios financeiros para tratar da floresta e parcelas agrícolas, frequentemente, fruto dessas circunstâncias, votadas ao abandono e, como tal, sujeitas a risco agravado de incêndio. Para estes, em geral pensionistas dependentes de escassos benefícios do sistema de segurança social, programas como as ITI poderiam funcionar como um acréscimo ao rendimento doméstico a aplicar na manutenção dos recursos fundiários. Por outro lado, uma vez que o programa implica a contratação anual ou sazonal de serviços junto de operadores locais (para a mobilização dos solos, para a limpeza e manutenção da floresta, para as sementeiras e colheitas, para pequenos trabalhos de construção e manutenção de infraestruturas, etc.), propicia oportunidades de geração de emprego e distribuição de rendimento na economia local. Mais: ao contribuir para inclusão

no programa de beneficiários com menor capital social e económico, os(as) assistentes sociais podiam ter contribuído para promover fins de justiça ambiental e social.

O programa ITI do PNSE não envolveu assistentes sociais. É razoável, então, questionar o porquê dessa ausência e o facto de as entidades responsáveis não terem procurado integrar profissionais de Serviço Social em nenhuma fase do programa. Por si só, este caso é elucidativo da dificuldade dos(as) profissionais em actuar fora dos contextos de prática mais específicos. Tal limita as possibilidades dos(as) assistentes sociais alargarem o seu campo de prática a contextos, projectos e serviços fora da órbita dos papeis profissionais habituais, assim restringindo as oportunidades para assumirem formatos mais amplos ou alternativos de prática¹⁹.

Em conclusão o caso das ITI do PNSE põe em evidência uma série de fragilidades de implementação local de um dispositivo de incentivos agroambientais devido a esquema de governança escassamente participado e limitado alcance social. Debilidades estas que poderiam ter sido atenuadas caso o programa tivesse envolvido um conjunto mais diversificado de profissionais, entre os quais assistentes sociais, posicionados em diferentes estâncias e níveis de prestação de serviços e em contacto directo com as comunidades e *stakeholders*. Com este caso esperou-se ter contribuído para problematizar a não participação de assistentes sociais em programas de incentivos agroambientais. Procurou-se convidar estudantes, professores e profissionais para discutir o (não)reconhecimento do Serviço Social pelos organismos estatais que administram incentivos agroambientais como um parceiro mais nos programas ambientais e, por seu turno, a aparente distanciamento entre os(as) assistentes sociais e a implementação de medidas de política ambiental.

Aplicação:

Instruções: Este exercício implica um trabalho de grupo a desenvolver em, pelo menos, duas sessões durante as quais quatro tarefas serão concluídas. No essencial, será pedido aos grupos que identifiquem e seleccionem casos que, como o que foi apresentado na lição anterior,

correspondam a esquemas de Pagamento por Serviços de Ecossistema. O casos seleccionados servirão para explorar, analisar e discutir a participação dos(as) assistentes sociais - ou a sua ausência – nesses dispositivos de política ambiental.

Primeira Sessão:

Exercício 1: Identificação do Programa

Os grupos são instruídos no sentido de pesquisarem e seleccionarem um programa que corresponda a um esquema de Pagamento por Serviços de Ecossistema, um pacote de incentivos agroambientais ou outro tipo de dispositivo compaginável com a promoção de SE num determinado território. A(s) escolha(s) fica(m) ao critério dos participantes e do formador. Programas ainda em vigor constituem uma opção interessante, pois permitem que os participantes possam contactar com agentes envolvidos na sua implementação. Todavia, programas descontinuados possam, igualmente, servir. Programas implementados em áreas protegidas humanizadas³⁶ (em que a paisagem tenha sido em parte moldada pela intervenção humana) podem representar boas opções, considerando a relação implícita entre as medidas ambientais e o contexto sociocultural local, a potencial complementaridade com dispositivos de apoio social existentes e sem esquecer os possíveis focos de conflitualidade associados à implementação das medidas. A informação relativa aos variados tipos de esquemas de Pagamentos por Serviços de Ecossistema e programas implementados nos mais diversos pontos do globo pode ser pesquisada na internet em diversas fontes institucionais (p. exemplo, em ONGs ambientais, em fundações, em agências ambientais estatais, na ONU, na União Europeia, em universidades e projectos de investigação, etc. – vejam-se as sugestões colocadas na secção “Recursos”, no final deste capítulo).

Exercício 2: Análise do Programa

Uma vez seleccionado(s) o(s) programa(s), deverá ser definido um conjunto de variáveis ou categorias em função das quais será recolhida informação (esta informação alimentará a discussão a desenvolver no final do exercício). As categorias a considerar deverão ser representativas das principais características do programa, seus

objectivos, cobertura e impactos socioeconómicos esperados. As categorias e variáveis a considerar deverão constar de uma tabela construída previamente (ver exemplo de tabela em baixo). Salienta-se que esta tabela deverá ser elaborada tendo em consideração as especificidades do(s) programa(s) selecionado(s) e do(s) território(s) de implementação, adicionando ou subtraindo variáveis em função da informação disponível. Itens como os princípios que norteiam a implementação do(s) programa(s), ou o tipo de direitos de propriedade prevalentes no território, a existência de conflitos (potenciais ou conhecidos), entre outros factores, podem ser incluídos no quadro de análise. A ideia é produzir um conjunto diversificado de indicadores qualitativos e quantitativos, fundamentais para suportar a posterior análise dos objectivos, cobertura e potenciais impactos socioeconómicos do(s) programa(s).

Tabela de recolha de informação sobre o(s) programa(s)	
Designação do(s) programa(s)	
Duração do(s) programa(s)/histórico de implementação	
Objectivo(s) do(s) programas(s)	
Cobertura territorial	
Tipos de medidas envolvidas	
Beneficiários (ou beneficiários potenciais)	
Orçamento	
Estrutura de governança	
Parcerias envolvidas (institucionais e/ou não institucionais)	
Staff técnico envolvido (avaliar feição interdisciplinar)	

Idealmente, deverá haver um intervalo de alguns dias entre os Exercícios 1 e 2 para permitir que os participantes possam recolher a informação e, eventualmente, estabelecer contacto com entidades ligadas à implementação do(s) programa(s). Se for exequível, tendo em conta os objectivos do Exercício 4, os participantes também podem contactar assistentes sociais que trabalhem em diferentes serviços no território de implementação do(s) programa(s), procurando saber até que ponto são conhecedores do(s) programa(s) e se alguém identifica algum tipo de laço profissional do Serviço Social com esses esquemas de Pagamentos por Serviços de Ecosistema. Seria pertinente, para futuro debate, recolher elementos sobre a colocação dos assistentes sociais nesse território, de modo a identificar possíveis relações profissionais com equipas, serviços e organismos ligados à sustentabilidade ambiental.

Segunda Sessão:

Exercício 3: Apresentação

A partir dos dados recolhidos e analisados no exercício anterior, os participantes devem preparar uma apresentação relacionada com o seu caso. Nessa apresentação, devem fornecer uma visão compreensiva dos potenciais impactos sociais do(s) programa(s), assinalando o papel que os(as) assistentes sociais tiveram (ou puderam ter tido) no seu desenho e implementação.

Exercício 4: Discussão

Uma vez terminadas as apresentações, desenvolver-se-á uma discussão animada em torno de tópicos como:

- (a) o potencial impacto social de cada programa e respectiva capacidade para reduzir os riscos ecológicos (p. exemplo, incêndios florestais, cheias, seca), para promover a justiça social, para mitigar conflitos socioambientais e para complementar medidas de política social focadas na melhoria do bem-estar;

- (b) o potencial que o(s) programa(s) oferecem à articulação entre políticas ambientais e políticas sociais;
- (c) discussão genérica sobre as possibilidades de participação de assistentes sociais no desenho, implementação e avaliação desse(s) programa(s) em concreto, evidenciando os conhecimentos e competências relevantes para essa participação;
- (d) reflexão crítica sobre os obstáculos que podem limitar (tanto de fora como a partir de dentro da própria profissão) a participação de assistentes sociais em programas de ambientais.

Recursos:

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[Sanitation, wastewater management and sustainability From waste disposal to resource recovery-2016sanitation wastewater management and sustainability.pdf?sequence=2&isAllowed=y](https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/8465/-)

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Outros Recursos:

Recursos multimédia sobre SE e Pagamentos por SE:

- Uma explicação do conceito de SE e valoração de SE pela Academia de Ciências da Califórnia:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BCH1Gre3Mg0>
- As tipologias de SE e sua relação com a promoção da biodiversidade de acordo com a União Europeia:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D6luBEJfi3s>
- Vídeo sobre Pagamentos por SE do Instituto James Hutton:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gzNWnREZ2xl>

O esquema ITI do Parque Nacional da Peneda-Gerês e respectiva complementaridade com a provisão de serviços de bem-estar:

- <https://vimeo.com/100102801>

Elementos sobre o conceito de Pagamentos por SE e estudos de caso:

- SE e Pagamentos por SE de acordo com o Millennium Ecosystem Assessment:
<https://www.millenniumassessment.org/en/index.html>
- <http://www.undp.org/content/sdfinance/en/home/solutions/payments-for-ecosystem-services.html>

Casos de implementação de esquemas de Pagamentos por SE na Costa Rica:

- <http://pubs.iied.org/16514IIED.html>

Informação da WWF sobre Pagamentos por SE, biodiversidade e conservação da natureza (instrumentos e métodos):

- http://wwf.panda.org/what_we_do/where_we_work/black_sea_basin/danube_carpathian/our_solutions/green_economy/pes/

Informação do International Institute for Environment and Development sobre Pagamentos por SE e sua relação com mecanismos de mercado:

- <https://www.iied.org/markets-payments-for-environmental-services>

Sobre as ITI do Parque Natural da Serra da Estrela:

- <https://saveserradaestrelaen.wordpress.com/>

Informação da ONU sobre a implementação e limites dos esquemas de Pagamentos por SE:

- <http://www.undp.org/content/sdfinance/en/home/solutions/payments-for-ecosystem-services.html>

Informação da FAO sobre Pagamentos por SE e sua relação com a segurança alimentar:

- <http://www.fao.org/docrep/014/i2100e/i2100e00.htm>

Sobre a relação entre SE, desenvolvimento local, sistema de mercado e combate à pobreza:

- Bilancini, E., & D'Alessandro, S. (2012). Long-run welfare under externalities in consumption, leisure, and production: A case for happy degrowth vs. unhappy growth. *Ecological Economics*, 84, 194–205.
- Dobbs, T. L., & Pretty, J. (2008). Case study of agri-environmental payments: The United Kingdom. *Ecological Economics*, 65(4), 765–775.
- Pagiola, S., Arcenas, A., & Platais, G. (2005). Can Payments for Environmental Services help reduce poverty? An exploration of the issues and the evidence to date from Latin America. *World Development*, 33(2 SPEC. ISS.), 237–253.

Join the Green/EcoSocial Work Collaborative Network

The editors also want to offer an invitation to all social workers to join the growing virtual, global Collaborative Network on this third Global Agenda theme. The Green/EcoSocial Work Collaborative Network is an international, collaborative network for sharing ideas, resources, asking questions, and building solidarity around ways to address sustainability and ecological justice issues within our profession. There is a Facebook group, [Ecologically Conscious Social Work](#), and a Twitter group, [Green and Environmental Social Work](#), and a google group listserv. If you would like to join, please contact the group's co-administrators: Meredith Powers at MCFPowers@UNCG.edu or Sandra Engstrom at sandra.engstrom@stir.ac.uk

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IFSW Friends join to show their support for international social work and to become of a world-wide community. As a Friend of IFSW you receive:

- Free online access to the journal: International Social Work (ISW) published by Sage publications. You will be able to access all the articles in the journals dating back to January 1959.
- Advance access to all IFSW publications at reduced cost.
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- The opportunity to create and/or participate in international, regional or local social work or social justice campaigns.
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- US\$25 per year for a student
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Notes

Notes

Around the world social workers are coming alongside communities that are unfairly impacted by climate injustices and helping to create solutions. In these roles, we must consider the opportunities of promoting community and environmental sustainability, **within and beyond** the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). While we need to be well versed in the language and concepts and be involved in conversations and actions with global partners for the SDGs, we must maintain a critical eye on the limitations of this framework and help shift the conversation towards real solutions (i.e., which can be sustained in the long term). We maintain that this shift involves embracing an ecosocial worldview and taking a degrowth approach for transformational alternatives to sustainable development.

This volume of the workbook series is thus, an attempt to demonstrate to the profession our relevance to the SDGs, as well as to demonstrate to the world that social work is essential to the realization of sustainability, **within and beyond** the SDGs. This book is intended as a tool for international social work practitioners, students, and educators to help advance the *Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development* theme of “working toward environmental sustainability”. It is the third volume in the series and is formatted as a workbook, with short lessons and exercises to help you apply the lessons theoretically and in your own practice. These lessons could apply to research, policy, ethics, practice, theory, interdisciplinary work, and more. Whether you are a longtime supporter of social workers investing in social and environmental sustainability work, or if you are new and curious about the topic, we hope this resource will inspire and equip you.

