
Critical Discourse on Social Space in Urban Sustainable Development: A Neo-Marxian Social-Spatial Political Perspective

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Abstract

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have grown prevalent in development discourse across numerous cities, incorporating economic, ecological, and social aspects. The critical discourse on social space in urban sustainable development, viewed through the lens of neo-Marxian socio-spatial politics, underscores the intricate interplay among space, power, and economy within the urban environment. The language of the SDGs is examined through the lens of capitalist economic frameworks and power dynamics in the development of urban environments. Sustainable development frequently entails intricate conflicts of interest among diverse stakeholders, including governments, corporations, local communities, and civil society organizations. Figures such as Henry Lefebvre and David Harvey engage in neo-Marxian social-spatial political critique. Manuel Castell and Edward Soja emphasize that power and spatial control frequently engender conflict through the commodification of space, illustrating that urban and rural areas are often regarded as commodities for economic profit, leading to gentrification, forced evictions, and social alienation. Economic and social disparities are manifested in spatial inequalities within urban development. Neo-Marxist socio-spatial political theorists emphasize equality, social justice, and individuals' rights to urban space. The research of SDGs is predominantly focused on the junction of economic and ecological mutualism, rather than sufficiently addressing the social and spatial components. This neo-Marxian social-spatial political approach elucidates the complexities and inequities inherent in urban development, providing an analytical framework to comprehend and tackle the issues associated with attaining sustainable and inclusive urban growth.

Keywords:

critical discourse, sosio spatial politics, sustainable development goal's

Abstrak

Tujuan Pembangunan Berkelanjutan (SDGs) telah menjadi wacana yang lazim dalam wacana pembangunan di berbagai kota, yang menggabungkan aspek ekonomi, ekologi, dan sosial. Wacana kritis tentang ruang sosial dalam pembangunan berkelanjutan di perkotaan, yang dilihat melalui lensa politik sosio-spasial neo-Marxian, menggarisbawahi hubungan yang rumit antara ruang, kekuasaan, dan ekonomi di lingkungan perkotaan. Bahasa SDGs ditelaah melalui lensa kerangka kerja ekonomi kapitalis dan dinamika kekuasaan dalam pengembangan lingkungan perkotaan. Pembangunan berkelanjutan sering kali melibatkan konflik kepentingan yang rumit di antara berbagai pemangku kepentingan, termasuk pemerintah, perusahaan, masyarakat lokal, dan organisasi masyarakat sipil. Tokoh-tokoh seperti Henry Lefebvre dan David Harvey terlibat dalam kritik politik sosial-spasial neo-Marxian. Manuel Castell dan Edward Soja menekankan bahwa kekuasaan dan kontrol spasial sering kali menimbulkan konflik melalui komodifikasi

ruang, yang mengilustrasikan bahwa wilayah perkotaan dan pedesaan sering kali dianggap sebagai komoditas untuk mendapatkan keuntungan ekonomi, yang mengarah pada gentrifikasi, penggusuran paksa, dan keterasingan sosial. Kesenjangan ekonomi dan sosial dimanifestasikan dalam ketidaksetaraan spasial dalam pembangunan perkotaan. Para ahli teori politik sosio-spasial Neo-Marxis menekankan pada kesetaraan, keadilan sosial, dan hak-hak individu atas ruang kota. Penelitian SDGs sebagian besar difokuskan pada persimpangan antara mutualisme ekonomi dan ekologi, dan tidak cukup membahas komponen sosial dan spasial. Pendekatan politik sosial-spasial neo-Marxian ini menjelaskan kompleksitas dan ketidaksetaraan yang melekat pada pembangunan perkotaan, memberikan kerangka kerja analitis untuk memahami dan mengatasi masalah yang terkait dengan pencapaian pertumbuhan perkotaan yang berkelanjutan dan inklusif.

Kata kunci:

wacana kritis, politik sosio spasial, tujuan pembangunan berkelanjutan

Introduction

Urban development in the 21st century is characterized by swift transformation propelled by globalization, neoliberal economic policies, and the quest for sustainability objectives, such as those delineated in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Nonetheless, below the facade of advancement exists a significant conflict: the alignment of capitalist urbanization with the tenets of social equality, environmental justice, and inclusivity. This dynamic has established metropolitan areas as sites of political, economic, and social conflict, where the discourse of sustainability frequently conceals the perpetuation of spatial disparities and power imbalances.

Symmetrically aligning economic, social, and ecological challenges is undoubtedly more complex than integrating the ideologies of capitalism, socialism, and political ecology into a singular development model, as each variable possesses distinct values and ideologies (Harlow, 2013). The issue comes in the complexity of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as Castro (2004) posits that the SDGs persistently encounter ambiguities and inconsistencies despite being regarded as the most pertinent framework for elucidating the contemporary development landscape. For Castro, sustainable development, like to democracy and globalization, has emerged as one of the most discussed, disputed, and indispensable themes. The notion, initially established due to environmental concerns, has predominantly been characterized by conventional economic analysis, which often diminishes the significance of ecological sustainability. Castro (2004) analyzes the biases, rationales, and principal themes of conventional sustainable development theory, especially in economics, and investigates the critiques of mainstream analysis presented by diverse post-structuralist cultural theorists and Marxist ecologists. Despite being regarded as superior due to its heightened focus on ecological sustainability, neither of these critical methods is deemed sufficient alone. The argument suggests that a comprehensive approach to sustainable development necessitates the integration of insights from diverse critical viewpoints. Conventional sustainable development frameworks, typically represented by the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, are founded on technocratic and economically focused paradigms. The prevailing dependence on market mechanisms and growth-oriented frameworks frequently prioritizes economic expansion over social and ecological equality. Castro's thesis emphasizes the necessity of surpassing the constraints of individual critical frameworks in sustainable development theory. By integrating the perspectives of post-structuralist cultural theorists, Marxist ecologists, and other critical viewpoints, a comprehensive and equitable methodology can be developed—one adept at tackling the intricate interconnections of economy, ecology, and culture in the quest

for sustainable futures. This synthesis enriches academic discourse and enhances the practical efficacy of sustainable development policies.

A biased depiction is found in Beck, D., & Ferasso, M. titled *How Can Stakeholder Capitalism Contribute to Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals? A Cross-network Literature Analysis* (2023) elucidates how stakeholder capitalism might enhance global governance to fulfill the 17 objectives of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Stakeholder capitalism may cultivate global collaborations and consensus, serving as an ideal mechanism to advance decent work, economic growth, innovation, infrastructural development, and industrial dynamism sustainably. The primary components of stakeholder capitalism theory can facilitate the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals: stakeholder identification, stakeholder salience (power, urgency, legitimacy, and closeness), corporate social responsibility, and value generation.

Schwab and Vanham (2021) contend that, within the framework of stakeholder capitalism, all stakeholders need to possess equal authority in a free market system. Mechanisms for checks and balances are integrated into stakeholder capitalism to equilibrate power among stakeholders, ensuring that the interests of shareholders and the state do not supersede those of other stakeholders. Furthermore, governments, corporations, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) must to be invested in realizing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The premises of stakeholder theory introduce ethical and sustainability concerns in social, environmental, and economic dimensions. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have become a principal paradigm for worldwide urban development, highlighting the amalgamation of economic advancement, environmental conservation, and social fairness. From a Neo-Marxian viewpoint on social-spatial politics, the critical discourse regarding social space in urban sustainable development exposes considerable tensions in the execution of SDGs within capitalist urban environments. This paper examines how capitalism frameworks, power relations, and economic motivations influence and frequently limit the achievement of truly sustainable and inclusive urban environments. The capitalist appropriation of sustainability manifests in urban sustainability programs frequently propelled by market-oriented solutions, including eco-friendly housing developments, green infrastructure, and smart city technologies. These solutions often serve rich populations, resulting in gentrification and the displacement of vulnerable communities. The monetization of sustainability may intensify inequality, as ecological areas transform into exclusive domains for elite consumption.

Urban space results from capitalist mechanisms designed to optimize profit and perpetuate capital. Spatial injustice arises when urban planning and development favor the interests of powerful economic entities, frequently sidelining marginalized groups. Sustainable development, although ostensibly inclusive, is frequently co-opted by capitalist interests to perpetuate accumulation and dominance, a phenomenon known as "green capitalism". Governments and corporations frequently monopolize urban planning processes, marginalizing local communities and civil society organizations. The "participatory" frameworks advocated by the SDGs may become superficial, soliciting community feedback that is seldom incorporated in a meaningful manner. In places such as Jakarta, Nairobi, and Mumbai, slum clearance initiatives are advocated as sustainable urban revitalization. Nonetheless, these initiatives frequently dislocate several low-income inhabitants without sufficient relocation, favoring upscale real estate and infrastructural advancements. Urban centers such as New York and Rotterdam have implemented ambitious climate adaptation measures, encompassing flood barriers and resilient urban architecture (Swyngedouw, 2011; Firman, 2013; Padawangi, 2012;

Colven, 2017; Hickel, 2019). Although these projects correspond with SDG objectives, they frequently prioritize the preservation of high-value real estate over the needs of vulnerable communities in low-income regions. The discourse of sustainability conceals the underlying principles of capital accumulation and dispossession.

The World Economic Forum (2022) asserted that stakeholder capitalism can facilitate more sustainable and inclusive global development: "Stakeholder capitalism, intended to benefit all stakeholders and the environment, rather than solely shareholders, can serve as a mechanism to attain improved global health, enhanced sustainability, more inclusive development, and superior productivity growth." Furthermore, collaborations and alliances between stakeholders are considered essential for the effective execution of the SDGs (Stafford-Smith et al., 2017). Aminah (2022) examines the relationship between capitalism and ecology, highlighting how the establishment of green cities is integral to Surabaya's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), leading to its evolution into a modern city propelled by investors and developers to enhance Surabaya's sustainability and viability as an environmentally-friendly city.

A critical analysis of Hope J.'s work, *Globalizing Sustainable Development: Decolonial Disruptions and Environmental Justice in Bolivia* (2022), illustrates the ambivalence of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Bolivia, highlighting how developing nations, particularly those with pronounced local ethnicities, confront post-colonial challenges within the global development framework. The execution of the 2030 Agenda has altered the delineations between international development and indigenous territorial priorities. The "boomerang effect" is being significantly altered as development infrastructure becomes detached from the territorial politics of indigenous peoples opposing extraction. The interactions among states, the private sector, and NGOs are being reshaped by a cohesive sustainable development agenda, which undermines the efforts of indigenous peoples to achieve territorial sovereignty and environmental sustainable development goals (SDGs).

Junior's assessment, titled *Sustainable Development or Capital Sustainable? Reflections on Green Capitalism* (2023), critiques the discourse around the SDGs as a novel manifestation of capitalist hegemony, illustrating how capitalism prioritizes its economic interests and exploits nature for profit. Capitalism has recently embraced sustainable development terminology; nevertheless, in practice, it continues to destroy and deforest nature. This narrative employed by capitalism assigns human nature as the root of environmental degradation and the improper utilization of natural resources. Consequently, several individuals embrace this erroneous narrative and practice of sustainability. Nevertheless, it is evident that the issue extends beyond mere discourse and encompasses the entirety of the capitalist system.

To address the aforementioned difficulties of sustainability, it is essential to integrate the elements of social space. Comprehend the dialogue regarding the social spatial aspect of sustainable development. The "sustainability" strategy is appropriate for this task as it requires social and ecological viewpoints and envisions current activities in the future (Sakalasooriya, 2021). Sustainability refers to the potential of ecological systems to preserve and improve the quality of social systems. Preserving this capacity necessitates the analysis and comprehension of feedback mechanisms and, more broadly, the dynamics of interactions between ecological and social systems.

The examination of social-ecological systems must take into account human communities and natural resources, together with their alterations due to human activities over time. The primary focus of social-ecological theory is to elucidate both the feedback mechanisms of human actions on the biophysical environment and the subsequent responses of the biophysical environment to those actions. Berkes, Colding,

and Folke (2003); Van der Leeuw (2000). From a political standpoint, the enduring sustainability of a socio-ecological system relies on regulations that align with the characteristics of resource systems, resource units, and resource consumers. Initial rules, regulations, policies, and strategies should be established by the users of the social-ecological system's resources or by governments with significant public involvement. Long-term sustainability cannot be attained without user input (Ostrom, 2009).

In the political realm, the notion of urban sustainable development frequently evolves into a fight for urban space, focusing on issues of power, agency, and entitlement. The formulation, design, management, and organization of urban areas encompass not only technical and environmental considerations but also the political dynamics regarding decision-making and the prioritization of interests. Does the narrative of sustainability encompass economic, ecological, or social dimensions? The research by Feng & Hou (2023) examines urban social-spatial dynamics and sustainable development, emphasizing social-spatial components (such as urban social-spatial structure, living environments, and activity spaces) alongside social sustainability factors (including community integration, enhancement of population welfare, and mitigation of social inequality).

The elevated rate of urbanization, industrialization, and globalization has led to spatial reconfiguration, which is a pivotal change in the evolution of urban society throughout the transition period, with this transformation being evident in spatial alterations. Urban social space serves as a venue for the manifestation of power, interests, and ideas. Conversely, urban social space conceals and perpetuates deep-seated social issues, including social stratification, power disputes, and competing interests, which are masked by occurrences such as urban development, gentrification, and industrial restructuring. These societal issues significantly impede the sustainable development of urban areas. Consequently, it is essential to examine the transition and rebuilding of urban social space, delineate its characteristics, identify existing issues, and provide appropriate remedies. This holds both theoretical and practical significance for attaining sustainable urban development.

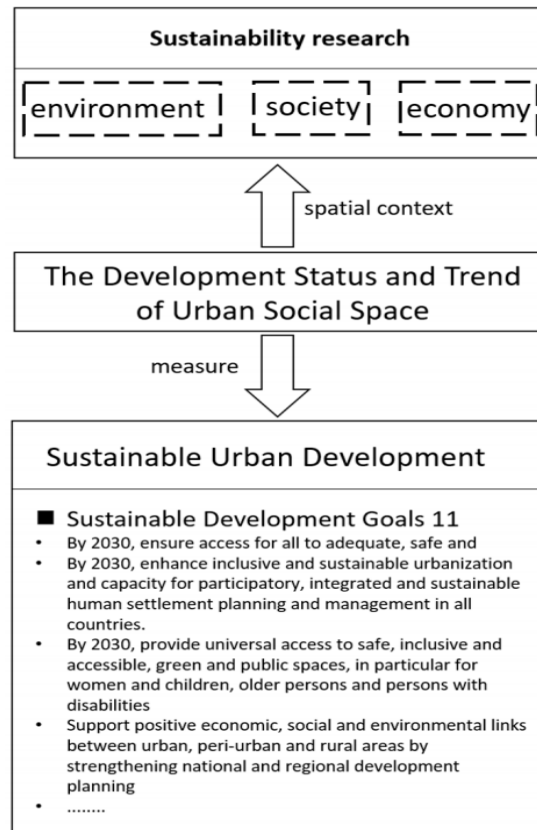


Figure 1. Relationship between Social Space Dimension and City SDG's (Feng & Hou, 2023)

Building on the aforementioned research studies, the author critically examines the formation of urban social space dimensions through a neo-Marxian social-spatial political lens to deconstruct the narratives surrounding urban space capitalization while fostering constructive relationships among economy, ecology, and society. This is significant due to the absence of a critical analysis about the formation of urban space through the social dimension or urban social space in relation to the phenomena of urban development. In the research on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), there is frequently a predominant focus on the economic and ecological dimensions of sustainability, rather than on social sustainability as a framework for development assessment (Dempsey, Bramley & Power, 2011; Cope, Kernan, Sanders & Ward, 2022; Feng & Hou, 2023).

This paper employs the Neo-Marxian critique to examine urban sustainable development, specifically within the context of social space discourse. It examines the inconsistencies inherent in sustainability discourse, including green gentrification, technocratic government, and the displacement of underprivileged populations. This critique aims to elucidate the intricacies of urban development by synthesizing the perspectives of Lefebvre, Soja, Harvey, and Castells, while proposing strategies for more egalitarian and inclusive urban futures. The analysis commences with situating the theoretical frameworks of the aforementioned authors, followed by a critical evaluation of sustainable approaches in urban development. It finishes by examining the implications of Neo-Marxian viewpoints for reconceptualizing urban planning as a mechanism for attaining social justice, equity, and authentic sustainability.

Literature Review

The discussion on urban sustainable development, examined via Neo-Marxian socio-spatial political frameworks, uncovers essential insights into the convergence of social justice, spatial inequity, and the ideological foundations of sustainability. Essential focal points will encompass the analysis of power dynamics, social justice, and spatial inequality within urban planning and sustainability efforts. This perspective is grounded in the theories of notable scholars like as Henri Lefebvre, Edward Soja, David Harvey, and Manuel Castells, offering theoretical frameworks to examine the production, contestation, and utilization of space in relation to power dynamics.

Lefebvre's notion of "the production of space" analyzes the influence of political and economic interests on social space, highlighting that urban space results from both tangible actions and symbolic representations. His publications, including *The Production of Space* (1991), provide critical insights into the social construction and contestation of urban areas, emphasizing the dialectics of perceived, imagined, and lived environments. *The Production of Space* (1974) asserts that space is generated through social relations, including power structures and ideologies into urban environments. Lefebvre's spatial triad—perceived, imagined, and lived spaces—provides a framework for examining the stratification of spatial realities and their role in societal conflicts about urban development. Lefebvre challenges capitalist urban development for favoring conceptualized space over lived space, resulting in exclusionary urban planning that marginalizes disadvantaged communities. Lefebvre's concept of the "right to the city" allows for an examination of the entitlement of all citizens, particularly the marginalized, to influence urban space in manners that address their needs, thereby challenging exclusionary spatial practices. Lefebvre's critique corresponds with urban sustainability objectives that emphasize inclusivity yet are susceptible to exploitation by neoliberal agendas.

Harvey's *Social Justice and the City* (2009) examines how capitalist urbanization processes engender spatial inequities through his discourse on the "right to the city." His research analyzes how urban spatial arrangements mirror overarching class conflicts and sustain social disparities, especially regarding resource distribution and access to urban environments. *Social Justice and the City* (2009) elaborates on Lefebvre's concepts by asserting that capitalism dynamics intrinsically influence urban environments, hence intensifying social disparities. Harvey challenges sustainability initiatives that prioritize environmental objectives, contending that they frequently obscure fundamental class conflicts. Harvey's notion of "accumulation by dispossession" elucidates how urban development initiatives, including gentrification, displace lower-income communities to accommodate affluent groups, thereby entrenching inequity within urban planning. This critique is crucial for evaluating urban sustainability programs that may ostensibly endorse green growth while neglecting concerns of access, affordability, and equity.

Castells (1983) examines the interplay between urbanization and capitalism, investigating how social and economic dynamics influence urban morphology. Castells underscores the significance of social movements in transforming urban environments as a reaction to capitalist limitations. examines the relationship between urban growth and capitalist globalization, emphasizing the restructuring of urban environments to accommodate global market demands. Castells contends that urban planning within

capitalism serves to regulate labor, manage resources, and sustain socio-economic inequalities. In developing nations, urban policies are frequently influenced by foreign investment and international development objectives, which may emphasize market expansion at the expense of social equity. Castells' research offers a framework for evaluating urban sustainability initiatives in a global context, investigating their alignment or discord with local societal requirements.

Soja's (2010) analysis attacks the technocratic and depoliticized methodology of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), promoting participatory sustainability models that tackle spatial inequities at their core. This notion underscores the contentious and hybrid characteristics of urban environments, highlighting the necessity for participatory planning and the inclusion of multiple perspectives.

The studied literature offers a robust critique of urban sustainable development from a Neo-Marxian perspective, highlighting the interrelation between social justice, spatial dynamics, and power structures. This approach, by synthesizing the contributions of Lefebvre, Soja, Harvey, and Castells, underscores the necessity of reconceptualizing sustainability as a socially inclusive, participatory, and equitable initiative. Nonetheless, the issue persists in converting these essential findings into actionable frameworks for urban planning and policy execution.

Methodology

The research approach pertains to qualitative research utilizing critical discourse analysis. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) offers profound insights into the comprehension, implementation, and discourse surrounding the SDGs across many social and political contexts. (Olesen, T., & Phillips, R., 2008). An analytical examination of the SDGs can elucidate the intricate processes underlying this sustainable development goal, encompassing conflicts of interest, disparities, and the possibility for significant societal upheaval. A thorough literature study on urban social space and sustainable development. This literature analysis meticulously analyzes the relationship between urban social space and sustainable urban growth.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) enables the examination of language and narratives employed in urban planning and sustainability discourses. CDA elucidates how these discourses sustain power dynamics, disparities, and social marginalization within urban environments. A Neo-Marxian framework, integrated with Critical Discourse Analysis, facilitates a comprehensive examination of the ideologies inherent in sustainability narratives, revealing inconsistencies between sustainable development objectives and the capitalist frameworks that influence urban environments. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) emphasizes language as a tool for social power and control, investigating the impact of discourse systems on society. Norman Fairclough (1992), Teun van Dijk (2008), and Ruth Wodak (2009) are fundamental theorists in Critical Discourse Analysis, each examining the ways in which discourses shape and perpetuate social inequalities. Within a Neo-Marxian framework, Critical Discourse Analysis investigates the influence of capitalist ideology in urban planning discourse on the conceptualizations of "sustainability" and "development." This approach integrates Critical Discourse approach with Henri Lefebvre's notion of social space to examine how language and policy shape urban environments that perpetuate socioeconomic hierarchies.

The Sustainable Development Goals encompass an objective pertaining to "sustainable cities and communities" (SDG 11), frequently employing terminology oriented on inclusivity and resilience. Nonetheless, CDA might elucidate how SDG discourses may unintentionally perpetuate existing inequalities by favoring initiatives that accord with capitalist interests. Employing Critical Discourse Analysis, scholars such as Erik Swyngedouw contend that Sustainable Development Goals may function as "post-political" frameworks, prioritizing economic growth and environmental objectives above social justice. Examining the language of the SDGs uncovers these contradictions, illustrating how sustainability is articulated to prioritize market stability, frequently neglecting redistributive justice.

Employing Critical Discourse Analysis to examine urban sustainability discourse via a Neo-Marxian lens uncovers the ideological foundations of urban policies and emphasizes the conflicts between social justice and capitalism-driven urban growth. This method offers understanding of how alternative, inclusive modes of urban space development may be advocated to foster more fair and sustainable urban futures. CDA is especially appropriate for this research as it enables the researcher. Critical speech Analysis (CDA) emphasizes how speech shapes and perpetuates prevailing beliefs, rendering it suitable for analyzing the relationship between Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and urban planning strategies. The researcher use Critical Discourse Analysis to scrutinize the language and behaviors related to Sustainable Development Goals in urban settings, emphasizing their socio-political ramifications. This method analyzes the shortcomings of SDG implementation while promoting alternative narratives that support equitable and just urban futures.

Result

The application of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in urban development uncovers substantial insights regarding power dynamics, ideological foundations, and consequences for marginalized communities. The findings are categorized thematically, encompassing the textual, discursive, and socio-political components of the analysis (van Dijk, T. A., 1993; Phillips, R., & Olesen, T., 2008; Wodak, R., & Meyer, M., 2009).

1. Outcomes of textual analysis.

- a. Prevailing narratives in Sustainable Development Goal discourse: Technocratic discourse regarding documentation and urban policies frequently utilizes specialized terminology (e.g., "resilience," "efficiency," "innovation") that depoliticizes developmental issues and conceals structural disparities. Objectives such as SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth) are often articulated in relation to their capacity to draw investment and enhance economic competitiveness, neglecting the requirements of marginalized populations (Phillips, R., & Olesen, T., 2008). Sustainability is often commodified, with terms such as "green," "smart," and "eco-friendly" commonly employed, framing it as a market-driven notion rather than one that is socially inclusive.
- b. Silences and Exclusions: The discourse frequently marginalizes indigenous knowledge, community perspectives, and the lived realities of vulnerable populations. Spatial inequality persists as governments seldom tackle the

underlying systemic causes of spatial segregation, instead prioritizing cosmetic "beautification" or gentrification initiatives (Lefebvre, H., 1991).

2. Outcomes of Discursive Practices

- a. **Alignment with Neoliberal Ideologies:** The globalization of sustainability and the Sustainable growth Goals (SDGs) are portrayed as universal remedies; yet, their execution frequently corresponds with neoliberal urban governance, prioritizing public-private partnerships and market-oriented growth. The homogenization of development models frequently neglects local settings and cultural distinctions, as global frameworks emphasize standardization rather than localized, inclusive strategies (Castell, 1983; Marcuse, P., & van Kempen, R., 2000).
- b. **Tensions Between Global and Local Narratives:** National and local governments often interpret SDG targets in ways that align with political agendas or economic priorities, leading to gaps between global goals and grassroots realities. Marginalized groups contest prevailing narratives, promoting alternative discourses that emphasize equity and justice more than economic gain.
- c. **Interdiscursive Strategies:** The congruence of SDG language with neoliberal principles is reinforced by intertextual citations of economic research, global rankings, and success narratives from "smart cities". Greenwashing tactics use environmental sustainability objectives (e.g., SDG 13) to rationalize initiatives that relocate marginalized communities under the pretense of climate action.

3. Outcomes of Social Practices

- a. **Socio-Political Consequences:** The implementation of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) frequently reinforces existing power dynamics by privileging elite players in urban development initiatives. Gentrification initiatives mostly advantage investors, resulting in the displacement of low-income populations. The goal of urban sustainability, particularly through green gentrification, has resulted in the displacement of underprivileged people from major urban areas (Castell, 1983; Harvey, D., 2012).
- b. **Inequitable Resource Distribution:** The urban-rural split results in a disproportionate allocation of resources and development initiatives to urban regions, so leaving rural people underserved and exacerbating spatial disparities. Disparities in access to the advantages of sustainable urban initiatives, such as green areas or environmentally friendly infrastructure, are frequently confined to affluent districts (Soja, 1989).
- c. **Contestation and Alternative Narratives:** Grassroots movements promoting the "right to the city" underscore alternative methodologies for SDG implementation that prioritize participatory planning and equitable resource allocation (Harvey, D, 2012). Localized sustainability practices, wherein indigenous and local methodologies contest the prevailing narrative, advocate for sustainable models grounded in community values and ecological equilibrium.

4. Essential Observations

- a. **Capital Accumulation against Social fairness:** The analysis highlights that the implementation of SDGs in urban regions frequently favors capital accumulation at the expense of social fairness, mirroring wider neoliberal tendencies in urban administration. Urban redevelopment initiatives labeled as "sustainable" are more inclined to draw investment rather than fulfill the housing or infrastructure requirements of excluded groups. Policies prioritize economic outcomes over long-term social or environmental equity (Castells, M., 1983; Brenner, N., & Theodore, N., 2002).
- b. **The Role of Language in Sustaining Inequalities:** The technocratic and depoliticized language in SDG discourse masks the inherently political nature of urban development. This narrative presents sustainability as apolitical, although it actually mirrors and perpetuates power disparities.
- c. **Opportunities for Transformative Change:** Although prevailing discourses uphold the current quo, counter-narratives and grassroots movements offer avenues for contesting inequality. Recognizing these alternative perspectives can foster more inclusive and equitable strategies for sustainable urban development.

The CDA findings indicate that although the SDGs seek to advance sustainability, their execution in urban environments frequently perpetuates existing inequities and power structures. Resolving these difficulties necessitates a transition from market-oriented techniques to participative, community-focused approaches that emphasize social justice and equity. This analysis establishes a crucial basis for redefining urban sustainability policies, highlighting the necessity of aligning global objectives with local contexts and underrepresented perspectives.

The analysis of space via the epistemology of speech and knowledge has initiated novel advancements in spatial politics. The necessity for critical analysis of social space justice and the contextualization of urbanization necessitates the interpretation and revitalization of space, positioning subjectivity as a lens through which to understand the dynamics of a region or social-spatial environment. Interpreting space from a post-positivistic perspective signifies that the comprehension of space extends beyond mere territorial dimensions and modern structures, encompassing a dialectic of power and power relations that contemporary urban theorists influence in the construction and reconstruction, as well as the production and reproduction, of space. From this approach, critical and elaborative urban political studies have emerged through neo-Marxist theorists such as Henri Lefebvre (1991), David Harvey (1973), Manuel Castells (1977), and Edward Soja (2010).

Analysis/Discussion

Urban sustainability programs, including smart cities, green infrastructure, and urban redevelopment, are frequently presented as remedies for environmental and socioeconomic issues. Nonetheless, the critical discourse underscores substantial discrepancies. Sustainability initiatives are often associated with neoliberal principles that emphasize economic expansion. Harvey's notion of spatial fix elucidates how urban initiatives are employed to address capitalist crises by channeling investments into urban

infrastructure, frequently displacing vulnerable populations. Lefebvre's critique of abstract space demonstrates that metropolitan places are regarded as commodities for capital accumulation instead of as lived environments that serve the needs of all inhabitants. Gentrified green spaces may enhance environmental metrics but frequently marginalize low-income communities.

Lefebvre contends that space is not a neutral setting but rather a construct of social relations and power dynamics. The conceptualization of space as perceived (physical space), imagined (planned/abstract space), and lived (experienced space) highlights the discrepancies between urban design and actual experiences. Urban sustainability initiatives frequently emphasize "abstract space" to cater to capitalist objectives (e.g., gentrified green areas), while marginalizing the lived spaces of quotidian social interactions. Discourses on urban sustainable development often commodify Lefebvre's concept of "the right to the city," reducing it to a neoliberal slogan instead of advocating for equitable urban transformation. Harvey's analysis analyzes urban development's function in perpetuating capitalist accumulation, highlighting the city as a battleground for resources and power. Urban areas are designed to promote capital circulation, frequently compromising social fairness. Sustainable urban development, as articulated in SDG discourses, frequently corresponds with Harvey's critique by emphasizing profitability at the expense of equality, as demonstrated by green gentrification and "smart city" initiatives. Harvey's (1973) emphasis on macroeconomic systems occasionally neglects localized resistance and alternative sustainability models propelled by grassroots movements. Castells (1977, 1983) emphasizes that grassroots activism can contest governmental and corporate dominance over urban space, promoting participatory and inclusive design. Castells advocates for grassroots movements; however, the scale and complexity of the Sustainable Development Goals frequently marginalize these movements from significant involvement in planning and decision-making. He critiques the tendency of global urban networks to prioritize "spaces of flows" (capital and information) over "spaces of places" (local communities).

Lefebvre's focus on spatial justice is frequently overlooked in favor of market-oriented solutions that perpetuate existing inequalities. Soja (2010), building on Lefebvre, develops the concept of spatial justice and widens the trialectics of space to encompass historical and social elements. Soja attacks the tendency of urban design to perpetuate spatial imbalances, favoring elite groups at the expense of marginalized people. His concept of "thirdspace" incorporates lived experiences into urban studies, highlighting the necessity for inclusive and participatory planning. Soja's concept of spatial justice emphasizes the significance of inclusion; nevertheless, its implementation in urban sustainability initiatives frequently appears shallow, limited to tokenistic community engagement without tackling underlying structural problems. Urban initiatives purporting to represent "thirdspace" frequently neglect the fluid and contentious characteristics of space, resulting in top-down execution instead of grassroots cooperation.

The analysis indicates that urban sustainable development must incorporate concepts of spatial fairness, as highlighted by Soja (2010). Spatial justice guarantees the equitable distribution of developmental gains among various social groups and geographical areas. Despite the increasing focus on participatory planning, grassroots engagement frequently remains symbolic rather than substantive, echoing Castells' critique of technocratic administration. Authentic spatial justice necessitates the empowerment of marginalized populations to influence the evolution of their

communities. This encompasses participatory structures and strategies to contest established power dynamics. Spatial justice connects sustainable objectives with actual experiences. By promoting significant engagement and inclusion, urban planning can mitigate the exclusionary tendencies of capitalist urbanization.

Grassroots movements are essential in challenging prevailing urban development narratives. Castells (1983) emphasizes the resistance of these groups to hierarchical planning and their advocacy for more inclusive methodologies. Movements against gentrification and land appropriation embody the fight for the right to the city, a term important to Lefebvre's critique. Effective resistance necessitates the incorporation of grassroots demands into institutional planning procedures, guaranteeing that development initiatives correspond with the requirements of local populations. Integrating grassroots viewpoints into municipal governance helps convert sustainability programs into authentically inclusive enterprises. This necessitates a transition from technocratic planning to collaborative governance frameworks that emphasize social equality.

Urban environments are not neutral; they are actively constructed and contested domains of power, as posited by Lefebvre and Harvey. Sustainable development initiatives frequently perpetuate current power dynamics, favoring rich populations while disenfranchising the impoverished. Soja's notion of thirdspace underscores the necessity of incorporating lived experiences into planning methodologies to rectify these disparities. Discourses on urban development frequently obscure the exploitation intrinsic to capitalist urbanization. Harvey analyzes how sustainability discourse functions as an ideological instrument to justify dispossession and discrimination. Comprehending urban environments as contentious arenas necessitates a transition in emphasis from results to methodologies. This entails analyzing the mechanisms of power within planning and development frameworks and confronting the systemic imbalances that perpetuate these processes.

Theorists such as Lefebvre, Soja, Harvey, and Castells offer substantial critiques of the capitalist foundations of urban development and its consequences for spatial inequality. Their research highlights the necessity for fair and inclusive urban planning, contesting prevailing sustainability narratives that frequently exclude vulnerable people. The amalgamation of social, spatial, and economic factors provides a holistic framework for examining urban growth. Sustainability discourse claims to promote diversity, however its execution frequently exacerbates existing disparities. By emphasizing profitability, these projects jeopardize their inclusivity, compromising their social and environmental goals. However, neo-Marxian theories, despite their critical nature, frequently lack specificity and pose challenges for practical application in urban planning and policy formulation. These viewpoints occasionally neglect the autonomy of local agents and the possibility for revolutionary change via localized and participatory methods.

Conclusion

The examination of social space in urban sustainable development through a Neo-Marxian social-spatial and critical discourse perspective highlights the significant influence of capitalist ideologies on urban policies and spatial arrangement. This

viewpoint demonstrates that the rhetoric and practices of urban sustainability frequently perpetuate established power dynamics and geographical inequalities. Sustainable development, while purportedly addressing environmental and social concerns, often prioritizes economic interests over real social fairness under capitalism systems.

The social-spatial political theory proposed by Lefebvre, Harvey, and Soja emphasizes the interplay between space, power, and society within urban and spatial development contexts. This notion functions as a critical discourse analysis of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and their manifestations. Consequently, interpreting the SDGs transcends basic technical development administration, as it underscores the significance of comprehending the intricate linkages among social, spatial, and political factors in the pursuit of sustainable development. Models of social sustainability must incorporate mechanisms that gather collective perceptions and insights about individuals' experiences (spatial representations) in the formation of spatial identities and activities (representation spaces) to enhance urban social life (spatial practices). The representation of space is inextricably linked to spatial practices, and the two cannot be dissociated. Discourse building and spatial production encompass both material and non-material entities.

Neo-Marxian socio-spatial theories offer essential frameworks for critically analyzing the discourse around social space in urban sustainable development. They reveal the paradoxes and disparities inherent in sustainability initiatives within capitalism structures. To realize transformative change, these theories must be augmented by practical techniques that emphasize grassroots involvement, context-specific design, and the actual experiences of urban populations. By integrating perspectives from Lefebvre, Soja, Harvey, and Castells, urban development can transcend superficial sustainability to confront profound structural disparities and promote spatial justice.

This critical discourse study illuminates the opposition to prevailing narratives, as social movements and grassroots organizations promote an alternative vision of sustainable urbanism. The notion of the "right to the city" encapsulates the quest for inclusivity, advocating for a reconfiguration of urban environments that emphasizes social justice, community requirements, and equal resource access. The dialogue of these movements contests the monetization of urban environments, advocating for a redefinition of sustainability that includes the rights and voices of all urban inhabitants. In summary, a Neo-Marxian social-spatial criticism of urban sustainability compels us to reconceptualize sustainable development as a revolutionary socio-political initiative rather than merely an environmental or economic pursuit. Authentic urban sustainability necessitates confronting the fundamental causes of spatial disparity by deconstructing economic imperatives that commodify urban environments. By prioritizing social justice in sustainability initiatives, cities can advance towards the creation of inclusive, resilient urban environments that embody the interests and rights of varied urban communities. Only via a critical and comprehensive approach can urban sustainable development realize its potential to create cities that are really egalitarian and sustainable for all.

The critical discourse surrounding social space in urban sustainable development reveals the shortcomings of existing strategies that emphasize economic growth and ecological indicators at the expense of social equality. This discourse, informed by Neo-Marxian perspectives, underscores the necessity for revolutionary urban design that confronts prevailing power structures and emphasizes spatial justice. Reconceptualizing sustainability as a process that incorporates grassroots opposition, participatory governance, and equitable resource allocation helps advance urban development towards its social and environmental objectives. Urban planners and politicians must

implement these insights to develop more inclusive, equitable, and sustainable cities that accurately represent the experiences of all citizens.

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