

Sustainable Development Goals Mirage in African Economies: Reconciling the Competing Interests of Materialism, Sustainable Consumption and Well-Being

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Abstract

The United Nations report of 2021 revealed that African countries are yet to achieve a quarter of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that were proclaimed in 2015. Poverty, inequalities, unemployment, environmental pollution, loss of biodiversity, disease outbreaks, energy poverty and depressed economic growth remain as persistent challenges. This is so, despite the fact that, the African continent is endowed with vast natural resources considered necessary for the attainment of SDGs. It is against this background that this chapter employs a systematic literature review to assess the challenges that constrain African countries to attain SDGs. This chapter argues that one of the stumbling blocks that constrain progress towards the attainment of SDGs is the inability to strike an intricate balance between the seemingly opposing concepts of sustainability, materialism and well-being. This chapter therefore provides a critical analysis of the interaction of sustainable consumption, materialism and well-being as they relate to the pursuit of SDGs. The implications of the marketisation of sustainability and the threat of the sustainability liability are also discussed. The chapter concludes with the call for increased localisation of the implementation of SDGs as a way of accommodating country specific political and socio-cultural dynamics. The development of a coherent integrated framework is recommended in order to guide policymakers to accelerate the implementation of SDGs in African economies.