19

The consequences of environmental, social and governance practices within the European Union for the right to development in the Global South

*Serges Djoyou Kamga**
Professor of Human Rights Law and Dean, Faculty of Law, University of the Free State, South Africa
https://orcid.org/0009-0001-6803-9580

*Tom Zwart***
Professor of Cross-Cultural Law, Utrecht University; Extraordinary Professor of Law, University of the Free State, South Africa
https://orcid.org/0009-0005-9206-8188
https://doi.org/10.29053/978-1-0672374-3-1_19

1 Introduction 559
2 Contribution made by Southern companies to the realisation of the right to development 562
2.1 Corporate social responsibility as part of the embedded economy 562
2.2 Relationalism as the engine of corporate social responsibility in the Global South 565
3 The environmental, social and governance policy of the European Union 569
3.1 Introduction 569
3.2 Unintended bias 574
3.3 Geo-economics and weaponisation 574
4 Conclusion 578

* LLD (Pretoria); KamgaSAD@ufs.ac.za
** PhD (Leiden); t.zwart@uu.nl

Abstract: *In principle, environmental, social and governance (ESG) practices aim to improve people's standard of living and foster the enjoyment of the right to development. However, a close analysis of ESG reveals that they frustrate the right to development (RtD) in the Global South. To reach this conclusion, the chapter relies on neo-institutional theory, which describes an institution 'as a norm or set of norms that have a significant impact on the behaviour of individuals'. It demonstrates that the origin of ESG determines the 'rules of the game', which are informed by the needs of their creators. Neo-institutionalism posits that informal institutions that are socially shared rules, usually unwritten, that are created, communicated and enforced outside of officially sanctioned channels should be included in the 'rules of the game'. From this perspective, the chapter found that ESG practices do not capture relationalism, which is the engine of corporate social responsibility in the Global South; they contain unintended bias linked to their Eurocentric features, and they are likely to be weaponised for geo-economic battles – or 'green protectionism', which involves 'weaponising sustainability' to reduce competitiveness. Ultimately, these ESG practices violate the RtD in the Global South.*

Résumé : *En principe, les critères environnementaux, sociaux et de gouvernance (ESG) visent à améliorer le niveau de vie des populations et à favoriser la jouissance du droit au développement. Cependant, une analyse approfondie des critères ESG révèle qu'ils font obstacle au droit au développement dans les pays du Sud. Pour parvenir à cette conclusion, ce chapitre s'appuie sur la théorie néo-institutionnelle, qui décrit une institution comme « une norme ou un ensemble de normes ayant un impact significatif sur le comportement des individus ». Il démontre que l'origine des critères ESG détermine les « règles du jeu », qui sont façonnées par les besoins de leurs créateurs. Le néo-institutionnalisme postule que les institutions informelles – c'est-à-dire les règles socialement partagées, généralement non écrites, qui sont créées, communiquées et appliquées en dehors des canaux officiellement sanctionnés – doivent être incluses dans les « règles du jeu ». Dans cette perspective, ce chapitre a constaté que les pratiques ESG ne tiennent pas compte du relationnalisme, qui est le moteur de la responsabilité sociale des entreprises dans les pays du Sud ; elles comportent des biais involontaires liés à leurs caractéristiques eurocentriques, et sont susceptibles d'être utilisées comme arme dans des*

batailles géoéconomiques – ou « protectionnisme vert », qui consiste à « instrumentaliser la durabilité » pour réduire la compétitivité. En fin de compte, ces pratiques des gouvernements américains enfreignent le droit au développement dans les pays du Sud.

Key words: *environmental; social and governance; right to development; European Union; Global South; fair ESG initiative*

1 Introduction

In the Global South, companies serve as the engines of the realisation of the right to development. They perform this role not only through their economic contribution, but also by their social and cultural efforts, which culminate in their engagement in corporate social responsibility (CSR). In this way, Southern businesses have been able to build an impressive CSR record with the help of local concepts and practices. These accomplishments will be discussed in part 2.

However, the continuation of these businesses and their CSR performance is impacted by practices to implement environmental, social and governance (ESG) instruments adopted by the European Union (EU). This raises the question of whether the EU's ESG practices either support or hamper the right to development. To this end, the EU's ESG instruments, which purport to enhance sustainability, and their potential effects, will be reviewed in part 3. The strategies which Southern companies could pursue to deal with them are laid out in the concluding part 4.

This chapter is based on neo-institutional theory, which describes an institution 'as a norm or set of norms that have a significant impact on the behaviour of individuals'.[1] Because they determine individual behaviour, North famously defined institutions as the 'rules of the game'.[2] Institutions create a social order based on the predictable behaviour of its members. Neo-institutionalism makes an important distinction between formal and informal institutions. According to Helmke and Levitsky, informal institutions are socially shared rules, usually unwritten, that are created, communicated and enforced outside of officially sanctioned

1 D North *Institutions, institutional change and economic performance* (1990) 3.
2 North (n 1) 4.

channels. Culture and beliefs serve as informal institutions. People are likely to abide by informal institutions because they are a natural part of their cultural or religious repertoire. Formal institutions, by contrast, are rules and procedures that are created, communicated and enforced through channels widely accepted as official.[3] Legislation is the prime example of a formal institution. Since informal institutions tend to play an important role in the field of CSR in the Global South, it is their role that will be highlighted in this contribution.[4]

In this chapter, the notions 'Global South' and 'Global North' are being used. The Global South is defined as the part of the world that has had to endure Northern economic and political hegemony. Despite their divergence or peculiarity, in general, people in the Global South mainly rely on informal institutions, traditional values, affective economies and the informal economy.[5] Since people and countries belonging to this category are mainly located in the southern hemisphere, the designation 'Global South' is being used to identify them. The Global North is defined as the part of the world that has been exercising global economic and political hegemony. People in the Global North mainly rely on formal institutions, liberal values, the neoclassical capitalist economy and the formal economy. Since people and countries belonging to this category are mainly located in the northern hemisphere, the designation 'Global North' is being used to identify them. The chapter focuses on Africa and China because their communitarian ways of life (ubuntu and

3 G Helmke & S Levitsky 'Informal institutions and comparative politics: A research agenda' (2004) 2 *Perspectives on Politics* 725-740.

4 Eg, H Li and others 'Informal institutions and corporate social responsibility: A Confucian culture perspective' (2024) 56 *Applied Economics* 7083-7096; M Kpessa-Whyte 'Reciprocity, mutuality, and shared expectations: The role of informal institutions in social protection in Africa' (2018) 5 *Contemporary Journal of African Studies* 1.

5 J Nakua, K Owusu Kwateng & J Mensah 'When informal institutions govern better: institutional complexity and sustainable procurement bricolage in sub-Saharan Africa' (2026) *The International Journal of Logistics Management* https://doi.org/10.1108/IJLM-05-2026-0546; Y Xu and others 'The role of the informal institution; how does it shape the trust relationship between government and social organizations in China' (2024) *Sage Open* DOI: 10.1177/21582440241251930; A Casas & P Abitbol 'Informal institutions and social norms in Latin America and the Caribbean: a cognitive institutionalist approach' in C Avellaneda, N. Méndez Méndez & R Bello-Gómez (eds) *Handbook of Latin American politics* (2026) 188-199; C Dobler *The impact of formal and informal institutions on economic growth: A case study on the MENA region* (2011).

Confucianism) are part of the socio-economic ecosystems of Africa and China.

The contribution applies a qualitative and interdisciplinary approach. It combines a conceptual analysis of neo-institutional theory, relationalism and the embedded economy. Relevant EU legal and policy instruments, such as the Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD) and the proposed Industrial Accelerator Act (IAA), are analysed. The arguments made in this contribution are supported by a review of existing literature and secondary empirical studies on ubuntu, Confucianism, CSR, ESG ratings and cross-cultural bias. The chapter adopts an interpretive perspective, while relying on legal sources and scholarly research.

In this chapter, the EU's ESG practices are viewed through a Foucauldian lens. According to Foucault, 'power' and 'knowledge' are inextricably linked, as visualised by his use of the hyphenated *pouvoir-savoir*: 'We should admit rather that power produces knowledge ... that power and knowledge directly imply one another; that there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations.'[6]

Power and knowledge are merged during 'discourses', in the course of which the perimeters of acceptable knowledge are constructed.[7] Such discourses draw the boundaries of academic disciplines, while determining which topics can be raised and how. Only those who are familiar with the rules may participate in the discourse. Academic discourses interact with social discourses while creating social norms. During the past decades, the EU has played a leading role in the dialogue on CSR and sustainability. It is currently trying to widen the perimeter of what is acceptable in this field by instrumentalising 'sustainability' to protect its industrial base against Chinese competition. These issues are analysed against this backdrop.

6 M Foucault *Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison* (1979) 27.
7 M Foucault 'The order of discourse' in R Young (ed) *Untying the text: A post-structuralist reader* (1981) 48-78.

2 Contribution made by Southern companies to the realisation of the right to development

2.1 Corporate social responsibility as part of the embedded economy

According to article 1(1) of the Declaration on the Right to Development (DRtD), the right to development is an inalienable human right by virtue of which every human person and all peoples are entitled to participate in, contribute to, and enjoy economic, social, cultural and political development, in which all human rights and fundamental freedoms can be fully realized. Although states have an important role to play in realising the right to development, this is not their exclusive domain. Thus, according to article 2(2) DRtD, all human beings, individually and collectively, have a responsibility for development, taking into account their duties to the community. Consequently, companies are expected to contribute to the development of their fellow human beings as part of their moral duty to give back to the community. This responsibility of companies to realise human rights has also been acknowledged in the tenth recital of the Preamble to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Universal Declaration), which calls on 'every individual and every organ of society' to secure the universal and effective enjoyment of human rights. Thus, the second general guiding principle of the United Nations (UN) Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, which implements the Universal Declaration, recognises the role of business enterprises as 'specialised organs of society' in making the enjoyment of human rights a reality.

In accordance with these expectations, companies in the Global South, through their economic performance, actively contribute to realising the right to development (RtD). The entrepreneurial activities of companies, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in particular, serve as an engine for development by contributing to economic growth, job creation, poverty alleviation and inclusive growth in local areas.[8] Nonetheless, there is more to development than the economy.

8 D Fajarika and others 'Influential factors of small and medium-sized growth across developed and developing countries: A systemic literature review' (2024) 16 *International Journal of Engineering Business Management* 1-21.

Thus, according to article 1(1) of the DRtD, the RtD encompasses not only economic development, but also development in the social and cultural sense. Southern companies tend to take these social and cultural dimensions of the right to development very seriously as well, as their active engagement in CSR shows.

In the Global North, the market economy and corporate social development tend to be regarded as separate concepts. The distinction has been famously described by Friedman in an article published in the *New York Times* in 1970, entitled 'The social responsibility of business is to increase its profits'.[9] In the Global South, on the other hand, conducting business and engaging in CSR are considered inseparable. This distinctive approach to CSR adopted by Southern companies is somewhat hidden from view because of the widespread assumption that the market economy prevalent in the Global North has universal value. This view fails to do justice to the economic variety that exists around the world. As Polanyi has indicated, the economy is embedded in social relations.[10] This means that each economy is characterised by the cultural and institutional setting in which it operates.

Due to the embeddedness of economies, business practices are conducted within a particular cultural context.[11] This is true for the market economy, which is based on a particular understanding of the individual as being driven primarily by a desire to maximise material well-being.[12] Rational calculus and impersonal relations play an important part in the market system. However, as De Neve and others have demonstrated, it would be a mistake to treat the market economy as a universal and trans-cultural entity.[13]

In the Global South, the economies and business practices are steeped in a culture of caring for the community and for the environment. In China, these business practices are inspired by Confucian and Taoist

9 M Friedman 'The social responsibility of business is to increase its profits' *New York Times* (New York) 13 September 1970.

10 K Polanyi *The great transformation* (1944).

11 S Zukin & P DiMaggio 'Introduction' in S Zukin & P DiMaggio (eds) *Structures of capital, the social organization of the economy* (1990) 17-18; S Gudeman *The anthropology of economy: community, market and culture* (2001).

12 G de Neve and others 'Introduction: Revealing the hidden hands of global market exchange' in G de Neve and others (eds) *Hidden hands in the market: Ethnographies of fair trade, ethical consumption, and corporate social responsibility* (2008) 4.

13 De Neve (n 12) 3.

values, which urge everyone to treat others with respect and to act as stewards of the environment.[14] In Africa, business is conducted on the basis of philosophies such as *ubuntu*, which call for taking care of others and nourishing one's community.[15]

The differences between Northern and Southern economic and business practices are also determined by the dissimilar institutional settings in which they are conducted. Thus, neo-institutionalism makes an important distinction between formal and informal institutions. According to Helmke and Levitsky, informal institutions are socially shared rules, usually unwritten, that are created, communicated and enforced outside of officially sanctioned channels.[16] Formal institutions, by contrast, are rules and procedures that are created, communicated and enforced through channels widely accepted as official.

In the Global North, societies and the economies embedded within them rely mainly on formal institutions. These reflect and reinforce the rational calculus and individuality of the market economy. Societies and economies in the Global South, on the other hand, are mainly based on informal institutions. Due to the dominant Northern focus on formal institutions, informal institutions are often perceived as deviant behaviour.[17] This is exemplified by the use of labels such as 'institutional voids', which expresses the legitimacy of formal institutions while emphasising informal institutions' lack thereof.[18] This label fails to acknowledge that the need to regulate the market through formal legal institutions is a Northern construct, while economies in the Global South, on the contrary, rely on informal institutions.[19] Therefore, informal institutions should not be perceived as hangovers of tradition.[20]

14 X Wang *On moral capita*l (2015) 133-208.
15 SM Maluleka & E Ross 'Ubuntu or compliance? Knowledge, attitudes, and practices of owners of small-medium sized enterprises in Johannesburg, South Africa regarding corporate social responsibility' (2024) 1 *Journal of African Business* 20.
16 Helmke & Levitsky (n 3).
17 M Kpessa-Whyte 'Reciprocity, mutuality, and shared expectations: The role of informal institutions in social protection in Africa' (2018) 5 *Contemporary Journal of African Studies* 1.
18 J Bothello, RS Nason & G Schnyder 'Institutional voids and organization studies: Towards an epistemological rupture' (2019) 40 *Organization Studies* 1499-1512.
19 Bothello and others (n 18) 1509.
20 G Waylen 'Analysing gender in informal institutions: An introduction' in G Waylen (ed) *Gender and informal institutions* (2017) 3-4.

Instead, their support for sustainable and social business practices should be recognised.[21]

Thus, there are two ways to produce the trust necessary for conducting business.[22] One is to secure the necessary trust through formal institutions such as courts, which enforce contractual obligations, and central banks, which uphold the integrity of the financial market. The other is to rely on the personal relations of trust between the members of the business community. While rule-based, formal institutions support arm's length transactions in the Global North, relationship-based, informal institutions support personalised exchanges in the Global South.[23]

2.2 Relationalism as the engine of corporate social responsibility in the Global South

The CSR practice of Southern companies aimed at doing good to others and investing in the environment owes its existence to the relationalism on which social ties are based.

Confucianism, the main philosophy of life in China, emphasises the fundamental relatedness between individuals: Without relations with others, the life of the individual is incomplete.[24] Therefore, in Chinese social life, self-other relations are omnipresent and of crucial importance.[25] The Confucian self is socially defined: It is conditioned to respond to social requirements and obligations rather than one's own needs and aspirations.[26] The self is relational, that is, interdependent with and not independent of other selves.[27] The social presence of others is always entered into social calculations: A person constantly takes the

21 H van der Ven and others 'Sustainable commodity governance and the Global South' (2021) 186 *Ecological Economics* 1-7.

22 LG Zucker 'Production of trust, institutional sources of economic structure, 1840-1920' (1985) Working Paper Series 10-14.

23 I Oduro Amoako, C Akwei & I Damoah '"We know their house, family, and workplace": Trust in entrepreneurs' trade credit relations in weak institutions' (2021) 59 *Journal of Small Business Management* 1099.

24 DYF Ho 'Interpersonal relationships and relationship dominance: An analysis based on methodological relationalism' (1998) 1 *Asian Journal of Social Psychology* 2.

25 As above.

26 DYF Ho and others 'Indigenization and beyond: Methodological relationalism in the study of personality across cultural traditions' (2001) 69 *Journal of Personality* 933.

27 Ho (n 26) 13.

presence of others into consideration, just as those others are perpetually aware of the presence of that person.[28] Therefore, social actions do not flow from individual desires, but from the individual's perception of their relationship with other people.[29] Recent research has confirmed that applying a relational orientation framework is still valid and relevant in China.[30]

Consequently, social relations in China consist of reciprocal obligations people owe to one another. Interpersonal relations are based on a repertoire of social norms called *li*, or rites, which consist of customary laws and moral laws.[31] This 'immanent law' is made up of informal rather than formal institutions.[32] The core value is the concept of *ren*, which underscores the sociality of the person: An individual necessarily exists within society[33] or, in the words of Fingarette: 'Where there are not at least two truly human beings, there is not even one.'[34]

Consequently, business practice in China is based on the premise that companies need to treat their workers, their clients and their suppliers with respect and that they need to invest in their social and natural environment.[35] They are expected to cultivate certain Confucian virtues, such as care and respect for people, and to strive toward a harmonious society.[36] This serves as a driver for a culturally embedded CSR.

Ubuntu is an African worldview based on the Nguni proverb *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*, which means that a person is a person through other

28 Ho (n 26) 3.
29 Ho (n 26) 12.
30 Y Huang, O Bedford & Y Zhang 'The relational orientation framework for examining culture in Chinese societies' (2018) 24 *Culture & Psychology* 477-490; O Bedford, YC Huang & K Ito 'An assessment of the relational orientation framework for Chinese societies: Scale development and Chinese relationalism' (2020) *PsyCh Journal* 1-16.
31 X Yong 'Human rights and Chinese tradition (1992)' in SC Angle & M Svensson (eds) *The Chinese human rights reader, documents and commentary 1900-2000* (2001) 378.
32 Yong (n 31) 378, 384.
33 W Chan 'The evolution of the Confucian concept Jên' (1955) 4 *Philosophy East and West* 311.
34 H Fingarette 'The music of humanity in the *Conversations* of Confucius' (1983) 10 *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 340.
35 Wang (n 14) 133-208.
36 L Wang & H Juslin 'The impact of Chinese culture on corporate social responsibility: The harmony approach' (2009) 88 *Journal of Business Ethics* 433-451; H Li and others 'Informal institutions and corporate social responsibility: A Confucian culture perspective' (2024) 56 *Applied Economics* 7083-7096.

persons.[37] It regards the human being as a social being who aspires to be with others.[38] Ubuntu is founded on basic respect and compassion for others in society.[39] According to Archbishop Desmond Tutu, a person with ubuntu is open and available to others and affirming of others.[40] As Forster explains, due to its holistic character, ubuntu does not only apply to relations between living human beings, but also determines the relationships with ancestors, spiritual beings, God and the environment.[41]

Ubuntu serves as an important engine for CSR in Africa, because both are based on the same principles.[42] Researchers distinguish between CSR as a formal institution, that is, a legally enforceable activity, which is widespread in the Global North,[43] and as an informal institution, that is, a moral obligation springing from ubuntu.[44] Empirical research shows that owners of SMEs in Johannesburg and Malawi tend to regard CSR as an ubuntu-induced moral obligation.[45] Respondents made clear that CSR is not transactional: They would still be involved in CSR even if these activities did not bring in any present or long-term gains. For them, it would not make sense to focus on their affairs when those who make them exist are going through hardship.[46]

In Africa, CSR often takes the form of corporate philanthropy.[47] African philanthropy needs to be distinguished from Northern philanthropy: In African philanthropy, giving is regarded as a way for the

37 FM Nafukho 'Ubuntu worldview: A traditional African view of adult learning in the workplace' (2006) 8 *Advances in Developing Human Resources* 409.
38 DA Forster 'A generous ontology: Identity as a process of intersubjective discovery – An African theological contribution' (2010) 66 *HTS Teologiese Studies/ Theological Studies* doi:10.4102/hts.v66i1.731.
39 Nafukho (n 37) 409.
40 D Tutu *No future without forgiveness* (1999) 31.
41 Forster (n 38).
42 HM Kayuni & RIC Tambulasi 'Ubuntu and corporate social responsibility: The case of selected Malawian organizations' (2012) 3 *African Journal of Economic and Management Studies* 74.
43 C Dike Uba, M Nazmul Hasan & J Buba Mshelia 'Social responsibility in micro businesses in an African context: Towards a theoretical understanding' (2023) 32 *Business Ethics, the Environment & Responsibility* 166.
44 Dike Uba (n 43) 175; Maluleka & Ross (n 15) 419.
45 Maluleka & Ross (n 15) 425, 431-432, 433, 434; Kayuni & Tambulasi (n 42) 72-73.
46 Kayuni & Tambulasi (n 42) 72-73.
47 KM Amaeshi and others 'Corporate social responsibility in Nigeria: Western mimicry or indigenous influences?' (2006) 24 *The Journal of Corporate Citizenship* 83-99.

giver to realise their humaneness.[48] Philanthropy, therefore, is based on reciprocity and cooperation and, consequently, is more horizontal than vertical in nature.

The characteristics of CSR in an African context have been laid out by Dike Uba and others.[49] In their article, the authors focus on the practices of SMEs, in particular micro-businesses, which employ fewer than 10 people.[50] Micro-businesses are the dominant players in the economic and business landscapes of most African countries.[51] The authors note that many small businesses are engaging in CSR without realising this and without labelling it as such.[52] The owners regard their environmental and social contributions as part of their normal business activities, as their predecessors did before them. Contrary to what happens in the Global North, these 'silent' CSR practices are undertaken without any publicity or expectation of financial return.[53] Engaging in such activities predates the introduction of CSR in the North.[54]

According to the authors, the CSR of micro-businesses is characterised by its voluntary character, the personal relation between the donor and the recipient, and the self-involvement of the donor, who uses their skills to empower individuals and to address social issues.[55] Some owners make charitable donations, for example, paying the hospital bills of community members who are unable to do so. Others solve specific social problems by using their skills and experiences. Members of the third category of owners transfer their entrepreneurial skills to apprentices.

In summary, on the basis of these relationalist concepts and informal institutions, the Global South has a flourishing CSR culture,[56] directed towards 'giving back to society'.[57] This culture draws strongly on deep-rooted indigenous cultural traditions of philanthropy, business ethics

48 S Mottiar & M Ngcoya 'Indigenous philanthropy, challenging Western preconceptions' in T Jung and others (eds) *The Routledge companion to philanthropy* (2015) 151-161.
49 Dike Uba and others (n 43) 164-178.
50 Dike Uba and others (n 43) 165.
51 As above.
52 Dike Uba and others (n 43) 164.
53 FR Khan & P Lund-Thomsen 'CSR as imperialism: Towards a phenomenological approach to CSR in the developing world' (2011) 11 *Journal of Change Management* 76.
54 Dike Uba and others (n 43) 170 & 173.
55 Dike Uba and others (n 43) 170-171.
56 Wang & Juslin (n 36) 433-451.
57 Dike Uba and others (n 43) 168 & 170; Amaeshi and others (n 47) 94.

and community embeddedness, some of which go back to ancient times.[58]

3 The environmental, social and governance policy of the European Union

3.1 Introduction

Due to the corporate scandals and financial crises of the early 2000s, shareholder primacy lost much of its appeal. To make capitalism palatable again, calls to introduce a broader-minded business model, in which a prominent place would be given to non-shareholder stakeholders, such as employees, customers and the environment, grew louder.[59] Sustainability should become a touchstone for assessing the performance of companies. As a consequence, to acquire investment, companies could no longer limit themselves to showing that they are financially solid, but they also had to demonstrate that they take positive environmental, social and governance (ESG) steps.

During the past two decades, the EU has developed an ESG framework. By launching the Sustainable Development Strategy in 2001, which was reinforced by the EU's commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015, it has enacted a body of sustainability-related legislation, which imposes environmental and social obligations on companies.[60] These include disclosure and sustainability reporting requirements, such as the Sustainable Finance Disclosure Regulation (SFDR),[61] and the Taxonomy Regulation,[62] which were designed to

58 W Visser 'Corporate social responsibility in developing countries' in A Crane and others (eds) *The Oxford handbook of social responsibility* (2008) 480-481.

59 S Moarefy *The new power brokers, the rise of asset manager capitalism and the new economic order* (2024) 70-72.

60 'Environmental policy: General principles and policy framework', https://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/en/sheet/71/environment-policy-general-principles-and-basic-framework (accessed 30 September 2026).

61 Regulation (EU) 2019/2088 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 November 2019 on sustainability-related disclosures in the financial services sector (text with EEA relevance), https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2019/2088/oj/eng (accessed 30 September 2026).

62 Regulation (EU) 2020/852 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 June 2020 on the establishment of a framework to facilitate sustainable investment, and amending Regulation (EU) 2019/2088 (text with EEA relevance), https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2020/852/oj/eng (accessed 30 September 2026).

enhance transparency in sustainable finance. Human rights due diligence obligations have also been integrated into sector-specific legislation, including the Conflict Minerals Regulation,[63] the Batteries Regulation[64] and the Forced Labour Regulation.[65]

In 2024, the EU decided to incorporate ESG by adopting the Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD),[66] which contains binding environmental and human rights obligations for large corporations operating within the EU market. As a consequence, large Southern companies operating in Europe or aspiring to do so, as well as Southern companies that supply goods or services to large European companies, have to meet the environmental and human rights requirements laid down in the CSDDD. The EU has laid down an elaborate legally binding ESG framework in the CSDDD. The companies operating within the EU market are expected to publish reports on their performance. This includes input provided by their suppliers, which tend to be located in the Global South. These reports have to be validated by rating agencies or auditors, which are mainly based in the Global North.[67] The article focuses on the indirect ESG obligations that Southern suppliers to EU companies have to fulfil under the CSDDD.

In addition to the CSDDD, the EU has recently launched two initiatives that rely on sustainability for non-ecological purposes.

63 Regulation (EU) 2017/821 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 May 2017 laying down supply chain due diligence obligations for Union importers of tin, tantalum and tungsten, their ores, and gold originating from conflict-affected and high-risk areas, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=OJ:L:2017:130:TOC (accessed 30 September 2026).

64 Regulation (EU) 2023/1542 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 July 2023 concerning batteries and waste batteries, amending Directive 2008/98/EC and Regulation (EU) 2019/1020 and repealing Directive 2006/66/EC.

65 Regulation (EU) 2024/3015 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 November 2024 on prohibiting products made with forced labour on the Union market.

66 Directive (EU) 2024/1760 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 June 2024 on corporate sustainability due diligence and amending Directive (EU) 2019/1937 and Regulation (EU) 2023/2859, followed by the official EUR-Lex UR.

67 Supplier ratings and audits are a verification method supporting steps 3 to 6 (prevent, remediate, engage, monitor) of the CSDDD due diligence cycle. Directive (EU) 2024/1760 Omnibus I (Directive (EU) 2026/470).

First, the EU Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism, or CBAM for short, charges importers of goods entering the EU from third countries with a carbon tariff to compensate for the carbon emitted during their production. The tariff applies to carbon-intensive goods, such as steel, aluminium, iron, cement, electricity and fertiliser. CBAM has entered into force on 1 January 2026, and additional steps are being introduced in phases. The aim of CBAM is to prevent carbon leakage, that is, moving high-carbon production to non-EU countries with laxer emission standards.

Second, the Industrial Accelerator Act (IAA), which was proposed by the European Commission in March 2026,[68] provides a strong indication that sustainability is being used for protectionist purposes. The IAA introduces low-carbon and Union-origin requirements in public procurement procedures with regard to energy-intensive industry products, electric vehicles and clean technologies. Procuring entities will be required to include those requirements in tender documentation. The proposal also introduces a sector-specific approval regime for certain foreign direct investment (FDI) in emerging strategic sectors, namely, battery technologies, electric vehicles, solar photovoltaic technologies and critical raw materials. The screening will not be limited to security and public order, but will also cover economic security and internal market objectives.

When the EU introduced the CSDDD in 2024, the expectation was warranted that Southern companies would receive favourable assessments for their ESG efforts, in view of their CSR record discussed above. Since these companies play a pivotal part in the development of the Global South, the provisions on development included in the EU treaties served as additional reassurance. Thus, according to article 208(1) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), EU development cooperation policy shall have as its primary objective the reduction and, in the long term, the eradication of poverty. In addition, EU policy in the field of development cooperation shall be conducted within the framework of the principles and objectives of the Union's external action. According to articles 21(2)(d) and (e) of the Treaty

68 Industrial Accelerator Act – Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs; the Industrial Accelerator Act remains a proposed regulation under ongoing legislative procedure 2026/0068(COD) (COM(2026) 100).

on European Union (TEU), those principles and objectives include to foster the sustainable economic, social and environmental development of developing countries, with the primary aim of eradicating poverty; and to encourage the integration of all countries into the world economy, including through the progressive abolition of restrictions on international trade. In addition, the EU is building a closer partnership with Africa,[69] which requires goodwill and mutual understanding.

However, the experiences of Southern suppliers with Northern ESG systems are not very positive. Thus, historically, Southern suppliers have not been at the table during negotiations on CSR standards. They were already excluded when CSR standards were laid down in voluntary codes,[70] and this practice continues to this day.[71] This representation deficit has been papered over by the fiction that (Northern) non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and consultants represent the interests of Southern SMEs by proxy,[72] which is patronising. CSR initiatives are often framed and promoted by actors in the Global North with little regard for challenges faced by suppliers in the Global South.[73] The standards and concepts applied in the field of CSR usually have not been cross-culturally validated.[74]

In addition, the dominant way of enforcing CSR is the top-down compliance model described by Lund-Thomsen.[75] In this model, Northern companies try to avoid reputational damage by ridding

69 Africa-EU Partnership – International Partnerships – European Commission.

70 E Cheyns & L Riisgaard 'Introduction to the Symposium. The exercise of power through multi-stakeholder initiatives for sustainable agriculture and its inclusion and exclusion outcomes' (2014) 31 *Agriculture and Human Values* 409-423; E Cheyns 'Multi-stakeholder initiatives for sustainable agriculture, limits of the "inclusiveness" paradigm' in S Ponte and others (eds) *Governing through standards: Origins, drivers and limits* (2011) 318-354.

71 S Henson & R Loader 'Barriers to agricultural exports from developing countries: The role of sanitary and phytosanitary requirements' (2001) 29 *World Development* 85-102; M Blowfield & JG Frynas 'Setting new agendas: Critical perspectives on corporate social responsibility in the developing world' (2005) 81 *International Affairs* 499-513.

72 MT Gustafsson and others 'The politics of supply chain regulations: Towards foreign corporate accountability in the area of human rights and the environment' (2023) 17 *Regulation & Governance* 853-869, 855 & 864.

73 P Lund-Thomsen *Rethinking global value chains and corporate social responsibility* (2022) 41.

74 As above; FR Khan & P Lund-Thomsen 'CSR as imperialism: Towards a phenomenological approach to CSR in the developing world' (2011) 11 *Journal of Change Management* 73-90.

75 Lund-Thomsen (n 73) 9.

their supply chains of potential risks. The Northern companies gather information from the Southern businesses to demonstrate that their supply chain is CSR-compliant. Southern suppliers are subjected to demanding auditing and control procedures. If the Northern company is not convinced that the supplier is operating scot-free, it will stop doing business with it. This kind of negative screening,[76] therefore, results in a 'cut and run' approach, which only serves the interests of the Northern company.[77]

In the current geo-economic climate, in the Global North there is a growing emphasis on reducing the vulnerability of the supply chains through 'reshoring'. That means that activities that were once offshored to companies in the Global South are being brought back to the Global North. Offshoring during globalisation benefited the right to development of countries in the Global South. For Southern suppliers, being part of the global supply chain was a very welcome way to conduct business and to perform their CSR in the area of human rights. Therefore, reshoring is likely to have negative consequences for the businesses of these companies and the human rights role they are supposed to play: They are the 'organs of society' which are identified by the Universal Declaration as being mainly responsible for implementing human rights, a role that has been reinforced by the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.

While reshoring should be part of the rating of companies' ESG performance, because of the consequences for their suppliers, this does not seem to be the case. Merino has reviewed companies' current behaviour and scholarship regarding reshoring.[78] They pay no attention to the impact reshoring has on the communities that are hosting the offshored activities, despite the fact that it is obvious that reshoring has consequences for them.

Although raters and auditors keep the cards regarding their rating practices close to their chest, evidence is emerging that the standards

76 S Leins '"Responsible investment": ESG and the ethical order' (2020) 49 *Economy and Society* 78.

77 K Marzano 'The challenges of regulating global supply chains' (2021), content (rifs-potsdam.de (accessed 25 October 2024).

78 F Merino 'Further considerations needed to assess reshoring: Its impact on host communities' (2026) 35 *Business Ethics, the Environment & Responsibility* 2401-2411.

applied under the CSDDD do not lead to a fair assessment of the ESG performance of Southern companies, in particular not in the social domain.[79] There are two possible explanations for this: an innocent explanation and a cynical one.

3.2 Unintended bias

The innocent explanation is that the global rating and auditing companies, which are based in the Global North, suffer from unintended bias. Young Northern university graduates assess Southern concepts without having the proper knowledge or anthropological expertise to do so. The raters and auditors have been steeped in Northern liberal culture, and they do not have the ability to move beyond their own cultural frame of reference and judge companies that operate in the Global South on their merits. In this way, they cause harm while assuming to do good.

Bias has been identified as one of the main challenges in cross-cultural practice.[80] According to Van de Vijver, construct bias is most relevant.[81] Construct bias occurs when a source concept is matched to a target concept that is not truly identical.[82] Applying Northern concepts to Southern phenomena is a frequent cause of construct bias.

3.3 Geo-economics and weaponisation

The cynical explanation is that giving Southern companies lower market recognition in the social domain is part of 'green protectionism', which involves 'weaponising sustainability'. In that case, the social domain is used to reduce the competitiveness of Southern companies.

Vuong and others characterise CBAM as a possible case of weaponisation, since the carbon levy it has introduced is widely regarded

79 ZJ Chen and others 'Global versus local ESG ratings: Evidence from China' (2025) 100 *The Accounting Review* 161-192, demonstrate that local raters have a different view on risks and opportunities regarding Chinese companies than global ones.

80 J Watts and others 'Building quantitative cross-cultural databases from ethnographic records: Promise, problems, and principles' (2021) *Cross-cultural Research* 1-33, 11- 20; FJR van de Vijver and others (eds) *Methods and data analysis for cross-cultural research* (2021) 10, 11-28.

81 Van de Vijver (n 80) 14.

82 Van de Vijver (n 80) 16.

as an attempt to transform the climate agenda into an economic tool.[83] The authors point out that weaponising sustainability in this way obscures the line between genuine environmental concern and pursuing a geo-economic agenda. Such obscurity is likely to delegitimise the Commission's green agenda.

In the IAA, the Commission has attributed a dual role to trade: It is meant to serve sustainability and to protect the EU's market position. In reality, sustainability is promoted in the document only to shield the EU industry, which has been directed to adopt a sustainability course by the EU institutions, against declining market shares in clean tech industries. According to Séjourné, the EU Commission Vice-President in charge of industry, these measures are introduced to protect the EU market against Chinese competition.[84] Therefore, through the IAA, the Commission does not aim to tackle man-made climate change, but rather to pursue the EU's own self-interest of safeguarding its industrial base. Consequently, sustainability is being 'weaponised', that is, used by the EU authorities to pursue geo-economic objectives rather than addressing man-made climate change.

In addition to being excluded *de jure* by the EU-origin requirement, Southern companies will be *de facto* shut out from the EU's procurement market by the low-carbon standard, since acquiring the technology necessary for meeting the low-carbon requirements will act as an insurmountable barrier.[85] As signalled by Goldthau, the world may be heading toward an uneven low-carbon transition, in which developing countries find themselves in a vicious feedback loop of persistently high emissions and decreasing economic competitiveness.[86] By erecting new barriers and reinforcing 'Fortress Europe' in this way through the IAA, the EU is about to inflict major economic damage on companies in the

83 QH Vuong and others 'Weaponization of climate and environment crises: Risks, realities, and consequences' (2024) 162 *Environmental Science & Policy* 103928.

84 'European Commission proposes 'Buy EU' plan to compete against China' *The Guardian*; 'EU proposes "Made in EU" rules for strategic sectors to curb China reliance' *Reuters*.

85 J Damborg and others 'The EU CBAM and the Global South: A review of the economic and geopolitical implications of unilateral climate and trade measures' (2026) 21 *Environmental Research Letters* 5.

86 AC Goldthau 'The tricky geoeconomics of going low carbon' (2021) 5 *Joule* 3078-3079, 3079; A Goldthau, L Eicke & S Weko 'The global energy transition and the Global South' in M Hafner & S Tagliapietra (eds) *The geopolitics of the global energy transition* (2020) 319-339.

Global South. This will lead to disruptions and considerable welfare losses.[87] Consequently, they will no longer be able to deliver their economic, social and cultural contribution to the right to development. This was not an oversight by the EU since the low-carbon requirements are meant to keep Chinese companies out of the market, and no exemptions or differential treatment for developing countries have been included.

As yet, there are no indications that raters and auditors are downplaying the performance of Southern suppliers for geo-economic purposes, and it is not part of EU policy. However, there is proof that this kind of intentional bias has emerged at the member state level, where EU ESG policy is supposed to be implemented. Thus, in June 2026, the French Parliament adopted legislation 'to reduce the environmental impact of the textile industry' through financial penalties and advertisement bans.[88]

Although the legislation is couched in neutral and objective terms, the examples provided in the Explanatory Memorandum make clear that it targets Chinese e-commerce platforms, such as Shein and Temu. In a way that resembles the approach adopted in the IAA, the sponsors of the Bill provided two reasons for introducing the measures. They are meant to reduce the environmental impact of the ultra-fast and long-distance fashion brought to the market by the Chinese e-commerce platforms and to protect the French fashion industry. The claim that fashion traded by the e-commerce platforms is problematic from a social perspective serves as a justification for the measures. The sponsors state that civil society organisations have accused the platforms of a large number of human rights violations, forced labour, child labour, gender-based violence, putting employees in jeopardy and circumventing salary regulations. These generalised accusations are not supported with evidence, such as reports submitted under the CSDDD and, therefore, only create an air of impropriety which warrants taking the measures. One cannot exclude

87 Damborg and others (n 85) 1-11.

88 Proposition de loi visant à reduire l'impact environmental de l'industrie textile, Exposé des Motifs, Assemblée Nationale No 2129, 30 January 2024, text adopted by the Assemblée Nationale, No 258, 14 March 2024, text adopted by the Sénat, No 136, 29 June 2026 ; the law was finally adopted on 29 June 2026 and promulgated as Loi n° 2026-602 du 8 juillet 2026: https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/loda/id/JORFTEXT000054399113/2026-07-14

that this intentional bias regarding certain enterprises will also seep into the implementation of the EU directives.

This weaponisation of sustainability is widely regarded as part of a 'geo-economic turn' undertaken by the EU. There can be no doubt that geo-economics is involved, but it is questionable whether this step should also be characterised as a 'turn'. Thus, in two ways, the IAA can be regarded as a continuation of existing EU policy. First, since its establishment in 1957, the EU has consistently leveraged trade power in relation to the Global South, while putting its strategic interests above development objectives.[89]

Second, although the EU seems to be suddenly replacing its free trade position with a geo-economic stand, underlying this apparent shift is a consistent strategy of 'othering'. Othering is the simultaneous construction of the self or in-group and the other or out-group in mutual and unequal opposition through identification of some desirable characteristic that the self/in-group has, and the other/out-group lacks, and/or some undesirable characteristic that the other/out-group has, and the self/in-group lacks.[90] The EU tends to identify itself by turning third parties into 'others'.[91] Thus, for a long time, the EU has represented itself as a normative power that transcended geopolitics, while pursuing free trade and multilateralism.[92] Other major powers were portrayed as being geopolitical, that is, self-interested, protectionist, and engaging in unfair trade practices.[93] More recently, the EU presents itself as a victim of the offensive 'weaponisation of trade' and 'economic intimidation' by other major powers, which leaves it no other choice than to defend its interests through geo-economisation of trade.[94]

89 P Hansen 'The return of the repressed: The colonial history of the EU's geopolitical turn' (2025) 63 *Journal of Common Market Studies* 1420-1437; S Couvreur & J Orbie 'Continuity in times of geoeconomic change: The European Union's strategic trade relations with the Global South' (2026) *Journal of European Integration* DOI: 10.1080/07036337.2026.2652993.

90 L Brons 'Othering: An analysis' (2015) 6 *Transcience* 70.

91 T Diez 'Constructing the self and changing others: Reconsidering "normative power Europe"' (2005) 33 *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 613-636.

92 I Manners 'Normative power Europe: A contradiction in terms?' (2002) 40 *Journal of Common Market Studies* 235-258.

93 S Couvreur and others 'The good political trade actor? The European Union's discursive justification of the anti-coercion instrument' (2022) *Perspectivas – Journal of Political Science* 133-147.

94 Hansen (n 89) 1430.

4 Conclusion

It is paradoxical that a sustainability regime introduced by the EU to protect the well-being of suppliers and their workers, especially also in the Global South, is having the effect of undermining the right to development. If Southern companies lose access to the EU market or are no longer able to supply EU companies, not only will their economic contribution suffer, but they will also no longer be able to support their community and society through CSR. However, it is unlikely that academic critique alone will persuade the EU to change course. Some other strategies should therefore be considered.

First, if unintended bias is the main cause for underestimating the market performance of Southern companies, such construct bias can be prevented and corrected through vernacularisation: explaining Southern concepts and practices in terms that Northerners can understand. Vernacularisation involves transferring a concept from the source culture to the target culture in terms that members of the target culture can understand and relate to.[95] This can be achieved by clarifying Southern business practices with the help of Northern terminology and imagery. This will enable raters and auditors to understand and value Southern business practices properly, and to reach the conclusion that although they may be different, they actually do meet ESG standards.

Second, if Southern companies are undervalued for geo-economic purposes, companies, business associations and academics could join forces by setting up a joint platform. This platform can engage in research, policy development and interest representation. It is important that it also argues its case in Brussels, where EU policy is made. Such tasks are currently being performed by the Fair ESG Initiative, or FESGI for short, a consortium representing companies and business associations based in the Global South, which includes academics and academic institutions from the South and the North.[96]

95 For more on the 'vernacularisation', see SE Merry & P Levitt *The vernacularisation of women's human rights* (2017).

96 https://crosscultureel.com/fair-esg-initiative/

References

Amaeshi, KM & others 'Corporate social responsibility in Nigeria: Western mimicry or indigenous influences?' (2006) 24 *The Journal of Corporate Citizenship* 83

Bedford, O, Huang, YC & Ito, K 'An assessment of the relational orientation framework for Chinese societies: Scale development and Chinese relationalism' (2020) *PsyCh Journal* 1

Blowfield, M & Frynas JG 'Setting new agendas: Critical perspectives on corporate social responsibility in the developing world' (2005) 81 *International Affairs*

Bothello, J, Nason, RS, & Schnyder, G 'Institutional voids and organization studies: Towards an epistemological rupture' (2019) 40 *Organization Studies* 1499

Brons, L 'Othering: An analysis' (2015) 6 *Transcience* 70

Casas, A & Abitbol, P 'Informal institutions and social norms in Latin America and the Caribbean: a cognitive institutionalist approach' in Avellaneda, C, Méndez Méndez, N & Bello-Gómez, R (eds) *Handbook of Latin American politics* (2026) 188-199

Chan W 'The evolution of the Confucian concept Jên' (1955) 4 *Philosophy East and West* 311

Chen, ZJ & others 'Global versus local ESG ratings: Evidence from China' (2025) 100 *The Accounting Review* 161

Cheyns, E & Riisgaard, L 'Introduction to the symposium. The exercise of power through multi-stakeholder initiatives for sustainable agriculture and its inclusion and exclusion outcomes' (2014) 31 *Agriculture and Human Values* 409

Cheyns, E 'Multi-stakeholder initiatives for sustainable agriculture, limits of the "inclusiveness" paradigm' in Ponte, S and others (eds) *Governing through standards: Origins, drivers and limits* (Palgrave MacMillan London 2011) 318

Couvreur, S & Orbie, J 'Continuity in times of geo-economic change: The European Union's strategic trade relations with the Global South' (2026) *Journal of European Integration* DOI: 10.1080/07036337.2026.2652993

Couvreur, S & others 'The good political trade actor? The European Union's discursive justification of the anti-coercion instrument' (2022) *Perspectivas – Journal of Political Science* 133

Damborg, J & others 'The EU CBAM and the Global South: A review of the economic and geopolitical implications of unilateral climate and trade measures' (2026) 21 *Environmental Research Letters* 5

De Neve, G & others 'Introduction: Revealing the hidden hands of global market exchange' in De Neve, G & others (eds) *Hidden hands in the market:*

Ethnographies of fair trade, ethical consumption, and corporate social responsibility (Emerald Group Publishing Limited 2008) 4

Diez, T 'Constructing the self and changing others: Reconsidering normative power Europe' (2005) 33 *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 613

Dike Uba, C, Nazmul Hasan, M, & Buba Mshelia, J 'Social responsibility in micro businesses in an African context: Towards a theoretical understanding' (2023) 32 *Business Ethics, the Environment & Responsibility* 166

Dobler, C *The impact of formal and informal institutions on economic growth: A case study on the MENA region* (2011).

Fajarika D & others 'Influential factors of small and medium-sized growth across developed and developing countries: A systemic literature review' (2024) 16 *International Journal of Engineering Business Management* 1

Fingarette, H 'The music of humanity in the *Conversations* of Confucius' (1983) 10 *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 340

Forster, DA 'A generous ontology: Identity as a process of intersubjective discovery – An African theological contribution' (2010) 66 *HTS Teologiese Studies/ Theological Studies* DOI: 10.4102/hts.v66i1.731

Foucault, M 'The order of discourse' in Young, R (ed) *Untying the text, a post-structuralist reader* (Boston 1981) 48

Foucault, M *Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison* (Vintage Books 1979)

Friedman, M 'The social responsibility of business is to increase its profits' *New York Times* (New York) 13 September 1970

Goldthau, A C 'The tricky geo-economics of going low carbon' (2021) 5 *Joule* 3078

Goldthau, A, Eicke, L & Weko, S 'The global energy transition and the Global South' in Hafner, M & Tagliapietra, S (eds) *The geopolitics of the global energy transition* (Springer International Publishing 2020)

Gudeman, S *The anthropology of economy: Community, market and culture* (Blackwell Publishers 2001).

Gustafsson, MT & others 'The politics of supply chain regulations: Towards foreign corporate accountability in the area of human rights and the environment' *Regulation & Governance* (2023) 17

Hansen, P 'The return of the repressed: The colonial history of the EU's geopolitical turn' (2025) 63 *Journal of Common Market Studies* 1420

Helmke, G & Levitsky, S 'Informal institutions and comparative politics: A research agenda' (2004) 2 *Perspectives on Politics* 725

Henson, S & Loader, R 'Barriers to agricultural exports from developing countries: The role of sanitary and phytosanitary requirements' (2001) 29 *World Development*

Ho, DYF & others 'Indigenization and beyond: Methodological relationalism in the study of personality across cultural traditions' (2001) 69 *Journal of Personality* 933

Ho, DYF 'Interpersonal relationships and relationship dominance: An analysis based on methodological relationalism' (1998) 1 *Asian Journal of Social Psychology* 2

Huang, Y, Bedford, O & Zhang, Y 'The relational orientation framework for examining culture in Chinese societies' (2018) 24 *Culture & Psychology* 477

Kayuni, HM & Tambulasi, RIC 'Ubuntu and corporate social responsibility: The case of selected Malawian organizations' (2012) 3 *African Journal of Economic and Management Studies* 74

Khan, FR & Lund-Thomsen, P 'CSR as imperialism: Towards a phenomenological approach to CSR in the developing world' (2011) 11 *Journal of Change Management* 73

Kpessa-Whyte, M 'Reciprocity, mutuality, and shared expectations: The role of informal institutions in social protection in Africa' (2018) 5 *Contemporary Journal of African Studies* 1

Leins, S '"Responsible investment": ESG and the ethical order' (2020) 49 *Economy and Society* 71

Li, H & others 'Informal institutions and corporate social responsibility: A Confucian culture perspective' (2024) 56 *Applied Economics* 7083

Lund-Thomsen, P *Rethinking global value chains and corporate social responsibility* (Edward Elgar Publishing 2022)

Maluleka, SM & Ross, E 'Ubuntu or compliance? Knowledge, attitudes, and practices of owners of small-medium sized enterprises in Johannesburg, South Africa regarding corporate social responsibility' (2024) *Journal of African Business* 1

Manners, I 'Normative power Europe: A contradiction in terms?' (2002) 40 *Journal of Common Market Studies* 235

Merino, F 'Further considerations needed to assess reshoring: Its impact on host communities' (2026) 35 *Business Ethics, the Environment & Responsibility* 2401

Merry, SE & Levitt, P 'The vernacularization of women's human rights' in Hopgood S, Snyder, J & Vinjamuri, L (eds) *Human rights futures* (Cambridge University Press 2017)

Moarefy, S *The new power brokers: The rise of asset manager capitalism and the new economic order* (Palgrave Macmillan 2024)

Mottiar, S & Ngcoya, M 'Indigenous philanthropy, challenging Western preconceptions' in Jung, T & others (eds) *The Routledge companion to philanthropy* (Routledge 2015) 151

Nafukho, FM 'Ubuntu worldview: A traditional African view of adult learning in the workplace' (2006) 8 *Advances in Developing Human Resources* 409

Nakua, J, Owusu Kwateng, K & Mensah, J 'When informal institutions govern better: institutional complexity and sustainable procurement bricolage in sub-Saharan Africa' (2026) *The International Journal of Logistics Management* https://doi.org/10.1108/IJLM-05-2026-0546

North, D *Institutions, institutional change and economic performance* (Cambridge University Press 1990)

Oduro Amoako, I, Akwei, C & Damoah, I '"We know their house, family, and workplace": Trust in entrepreneurs' trade credit relations in weak institutions' (2021) 59 *Journal of Small Business Management* 1099

Polanyi, K *The great transformation* (Farrar & Rinehart 1944)

Tutu, D *No future without forgiveness* (Rider 1999)

Van de Vijver, FJR & others (eds) *Methods and data analysis for cross-cultural research* (Cambridge University Press 2021)

Van der Ven, H & others 'Sustainable commodity governance and the Global South' (2021) 186 *Ecological Economics* 1

Visser, W 'Corporate social responsibility in developing countries' in Crane, A & others (eds) *The Oxford handbook of social responsibility* (Oxford University Press 2008) 480

Vuong, QH and others 'Weaponization of climate and environment crises: Risks, realities, and consequences' (2024) 162 *Environmental Science & Policy* 103928

Wang, L & Juslin, H 'The impact of Chinese culture on corporate social responsibility: The harmony approach' (2009) 88 *Journal of Business Ethics* 433

Wang, X *On moral capital* (Yilin Press 2015)

Watts, J & others 'Building quantitative cross-cultural databases from ethnographic records: Promise, problems, and principles' (2021) *Cross-cultural Research* 1

Waylen, G 'Analysing gender in informal institutions: An introduction' in Waylen, G (ed) *Gender and informal institutions* (Rowman & Littlefield International 2017) 3

Yong X 'Human Rights and Chinese Tradition (1992)' in Angle S C & Svensson M (eds.) *The Chinese Human Rights Reader, Documents and Commentary 1900 – 2000* (ME Sharpe 2001) 378.

Xu, Y & others 'The role of the informal institution; how does it shape the trust relationship between government and social organizations in China' (2024) *Sage Open* DOI: 10.1177/21582440241251930

Zucker, L G 'Production of trust, institutional sources of economic structure' (1985) Working Paper Series 10

Zukin S & DiMaggio P, 'Introduction', in Zukin S & DiMaggio P (eds), *Structures of Capital, The Social Organization of the Economy* (Cambridge University Press 1990) 17