



Article

Human Rights and Territories: Academic Perceptions of the 2030 Agenda

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Abstract: This study is the result of the debate sessions held at the 1st International Conference on Human Rights and Territories at the Pablo de Olavide University in Seville, aimed at analyzing the impact and the agenda itself in the territorial and local contexts. To conduct the research, five focus groups were organized, focusing on the five elements of the agenda: People, Peace, Planet, Prosperity, and Partnerships, with the participation of over 30 international academics, followed by an analysis of the recorded speeches. The results provide a critical epistemic perspective on the 2030 Agenda and its connection with territories, concluding the difficulty of establishing human rights processes in territories from agendas that are centered from the global to the local level.

Keywords: critical theories; Agenda 2030; human rights; territories; intellectual capital



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1. Introduction

This article is a result of the I International Conference: Human Rights and Territory: Debates on the 2030 Agenda that was held at the Pablo de Olavide University of Seville in June 2023 and promoted by the Master of Human Rights, Interculturality and Development of the same university and the International University of Andalusia. This master's program, which has lasted for more than 20 years, has become an academic reference space for the critical paradigm, especially for the critical theories collected by the authors of the Frankfurt School.

Paradigms allow us to understand reality in a certain way, and, in the case of critical theories, this not only includes the understanding of reality but also implies social transformation; more specifically, addressing human rights from this perspective means reviewing the concept from a broader perspective that goes beyond an exclusively normative framework, considering the concept as processes of struggle for the dignity of the people who reside on the planet [1].

Therefore, understanding the 2030 Agenda as a sustainable development agenda based on the critical paradigm implies the need for comprehensive analysis, emphasizing the concept of development from critical theories of human rights. The researchers of this work approach the analysis from a perspective of critical development, in contrast to hegemonic development or development as a “myth”, as presented by the economist Gilbert Rist [2]. It is important to carry out a descriptive examination of the concept and not just focus on what “should be” as Herrera Flores noted that the concept of development inherently includes a conception of economic, social, and cultural evolution that is absolutely idealistic, utopian, and unrealizable [1,3].

This vision breaks with the hegemony of development, just as it breaks with the universalism of human rights; neither concept can be considered without understanding

them as cultural products. For this purpose, different layers are considered, with Professor Herrera Flores employing them within his 'ethical diamond', highlighting its potential as a methodological instrument:

"...as an ethical diamond, we launch ourselves into a bet: human rights, seen in their real complexity, constitute the framework to build an ethics that has as its horizon the achievement of the conditions so that "everyone" (individuals, cultures, ways of life) can put their conception of human dignity into practice". [1]

Thus, the diamond enables us to understand development as a human right, a dynamic cultural product that develops with various elements, such as those exposed in the diamond. Martha Nussbaum [4] in 'Creating Capabilities' argues that human dignity should be at the center of any development theory, advocating for a capabilities-based approach that enables people to flourish. This perspective complements Herrera Flores' vision by highlighting the importance of providing individuals with the tools necessary to achieve their own life goals. This diamond will be a methodological tool for this article and will be explained in more detail in Section 2.

The key questions of this research are as follows: does critical academic intellectual capital understand the 2030 Agenda as a tool for critical development? To conduct this study, the five dimensions of the agenda were taken as the key elements for analyzing and understanding it. As this is a discourse analysis study, this question is answered through reference to various researchers from different academic research spaces at an international level. This group of social scientists would represent an epistemic community, which is defined as a group of researchers with a reputation as impartial experts who play a key role in providing valuable information for the present study [5].

The results will ascertain whether the 2030 Agenda espouses a reformist outlook on human development or presents an opportunity to advance nonhegemonic development and human rights through a critical lens of the current paradigm. The critical paradigm was born from the Frankfurt School as the original source of Critical Theory, a social and political philosophical movement that criticizes modernity, capitalism, and social emancipation [6]. The theories of the Frankfurt School have had a profound impact on both the academic and cultural spheres and continue to influence critical organizational research and socio-political theory [7]. Five discussion groups were held to answer the research question; twenty-five academics from different research centers and international universities participated. Moreover, this study explores the implications of intellectual capital and social sciences for the 2030 Agenda. This analysis focuses on three key elements: (1) the importance of the intellectual capital of research centers and universities in improving the debate critical of the SDGs and their relationship with human rights; (2) the development of a scientific debate between the theories critical of the 2030 Agenda, which places greater emphasis on debating development itself rather than the agenda itself in a framework of human rights; and (3) development, human rights, and territories, which are central axes of the 2030 Agenda; these are framed in a specific methodology, such as the ethical diamond of Joaquín Herrera Flores. The tool used for the subsequent analysis is discourse analysis; this tool, which can be understood as criticism, incorporates social critique into its own formation of discourse, offering perspectives on research objects, subject formations, and contexts of academic production [8]. The present study has a transfer vocation as it is conducted with a relational engagement approach to the research impact, i.e., with the cocreation of epistemically critical academic stakeholders, complementing the traditional bibliometric measures, to maximize the social impact by using the present study in spaces of social discussion on sustainable development [9].

1.1. Human Rights and Development: Conceptual Approach

This work, which is primarily focused on the 2030 Agenda and intellectual capital, is based on a theoretical framework and uses critical development as an engine to generate the well-being, transformation, and dignity of people on territorial and local bases [10]. The

authors of this article use this premise for the analysis of the 2030 Development Agenda and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

However, in order to present a more balanced view, it is essential to consider alternative perspectives that challenge the critical paradigm. Modernization theory posits that development is a linear process through which all societies progress similarly, from traditional to modern states, driven largely by economic growth and technological advancements [11]. Neoliberal development theory emphasizes the role of free markets, privatization, and deregulation as the primary drivers of economic development. According to proponents like Friedman and Hayek, reducing government intervention allows for more efficient resource allocation and innovation, which in turn spurs economic growth and development [12,13].

Nonetheless, these theories have also been subject to significant criticisms. Modernization and neoliberal approaches have been challenged for inadequately addressing the social and economic inequalities that can arise from unregulated economic growth. Critics like Harvey [14] and Escobar [15] argue that these theories tend to impose a homogeneous development model that disregards the cultural and contextual diversities of territories. These criticisms underscore the need for a critical approach that views development as an integral and plural process aimed at human emancipation and dignity.

In this sense, critical development, as proposed by Herrera Flores, presents itself as a necessary alternative that promotes the processes of emancipation and struggles for human dignity, advocating for creating spaces that encourage the formulation of new alternative development models. This approach emphasizes the importance of understanding development in dialogue with context, time, and specific historical space in a culture of plurality and human potential for social transformation. In other words, development is conceived as a tool to be used in the struggle for people's dignity.

The 2030 Agenda was approved by the United Nations Assembly, and in the presence of 193 heads of state and government, on 15 September 2015, with the Resolution "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development", and "a proposal for all countries and interested parties, which came to renew aspirations for the eradication of poverty and hunger in the world", was enacted [16]. This action plan comprises 17 Sustainable Development Goals and 169 specific goals, all of which are oriented "in favour of people, the planet and prosperity". The importance of this roadmap is based on its universal nature, its requirements for multifactor and multilevel collaboration, and its multidimensionality in addressing the interconnected elements of sustainable development. These goals have a comprehensive approach to sustainability in their economic, social, and environmental dimensions [17]. Moreover, they are measurable, so the analysis and evaluation of their fulfilment are necessary. This process provides an opportunity for the participatory cocreation of action frameworks adapted to local realities, with the commitment to "leave no one behind" by promoting fair, safe, and sustainable territories [17].

The SDG proposal, especially SDG 8, advocates for growth by promoting sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth. Although the need to question the viability of unlimited growth on a planet with finite resources is raised, it is significant that, despite the recommendations of various United Nations organizations, the purpose of development is still confused with that of economic growth in the 2030 Agenda [16]. The goal of this agenda is to transform the planet but not to do so from a critical perspective.

The concept of development from a critical perspective is that this process must be one of human dignity. As Herrera Flores argues [1], a critical approach to development (even sustainable) should trigger the processes of emancipation and struggles in favor of human dignity; therefore, he advocates for the creation of spaces that encourage the formulation of new alternative development models. He argues that the process of generating alternatives implies a new way of being in the world, in dialogue with the context, with time, and with the concrete historical space, in a culture of plurality and the human potential for social transformation. In other words, development is conceived as a tool to use in the struggle for people's dignity.

Does this mean that the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs are not necessary? This is one of the questions that is also addressed in this article since it is based on the hypothesis that the agenda alone is insufficient to generate critical development; however, at the same time, it is an opportunity to create processes of change at the local level. Additionally, the objectives aim to prompt discussions about the concept of development, ensuring that they align with critical theories in local and territorial contexts, rooted in human rights and the diverse characteristics of these territories. David Harvey [18] argues that development must consider spatial injustices and cultural diversity, proposing an approach that recognizes the local specificities and the uneven geographical development that affect different territories.

The agenda is a global agenda that aims to land locally. Therefore, this proposal is a “top-down” proposal, establishing a global perspective to territorialize it. This can lead to difficulties on the part of territories because the cultural and real diversity of these spaces are not considered; that is, people who live in a particular place are not simple spectators of reality or reproducers of the logic of social functioning that is imposed on them. Even admitting that they can adapt to new realities should not mean giving up cultural and identity patterns that have provided meaning to their daily lives and have been built through dialogic processes over time [19–21].

Therefore, this article focuses on three focal elements—human rights, Agenda 2030, and territories—considering the so-called five dimensions of Agenda 2030—People, Prosperity, Planet, Alliances (or Partnerships), and Peace—which are known as the five “Ps” that structure the SDGs, as represented in Figure 1.



Figure 1. Five “Ps” structure of Agenda 2030. Source: author’s own elaboration.

1.2. Human Rights, Critical Development, and Agenda 2030

The theoretical framework in which this study is situated has been presented in the introduction of the work. It is based on the critical theories of human rights and, therefore, of critical development, understanding that they are connected concepts that bring territories closer to human dignity. We must refer to the work of the economist Gilbert Rist and Professor Herrera Flores as references to the critical paradigm in Development and Human Rights. Rist [2] refers to the current hegemonic development model, establishing a competitiveness ranking between countries or territories ultimately determined by wealthy and

impoverished countries [22]. Setting this duality refers to understanding which countries exploit the planet's ecological resources and which are used.

However, Herrera Flores establishes that human dignity is not isolated or natural to individuals or territories. In contrast, different communities must be built with historical processes over time [1]. Thus, the concept of critical development focuses on the dignity of the people in communities and territories, specifically the processes of struggle. This allows the reader to break with the hegemonic vision of development that essentially focuses on the GDP of a region [2].

Thus, critical development becomes a cultural product that generates processes that allow access to a territory's material and immaterial goods, improving people's quality of life.

Herrera Flores insists on discussing processes and culture when discussing human rights and, therefore, the right to development. The 2030 Agenda, therefore, is not an innovation for "development" since, citing Carlos Gil [23], it is understood that all its objectives and goals are global agreements of international conferences but that, historically, they have not been systematically met. Therefore, it is necessary to break away from this globalist view of development to establish more comprehensive perspectives, such as critical theories of human rights and critical development. Boaventura de Sousa Santos [24] emphasizes the need to recognize and value local and community knowledge in the face of the epistemicide promoted by hegemonic development, advocating for the inclusion of diverse epistemologies in the discourse on human rights and development

This view, in which development is understood as a fundamental right, prioritizes the social and, subsequently, cultural processes in their context. From these processes, an identity that represents the community of a territory is generated [25].

Therefore, critical development is defined as cultural products that allow communities to be built in territories in a participatory manner through actions and reactions within social transformation, generating responses to the human needs of different communities [10]. Critical development is also an approach to key elements that need to be considered when conducting an analysis of the 2030 Agenda and sustainable development. Using the dialectical tools offered by the ethical diamond will allow for an analysis that favors a comprehensive view of critical development.

1.3. Agenda 2030 and Territories: Dimensions and Locations of the Sustainable Development Goals: Should the Agenda Be Implemented, or Does It Allow the Territories to Be Visible?

The recognition of the diversity in the contexts and territories and the national/local reality in the 2030 Agenda appears in point 21, where it is contemplated that the agenda is intended to be applied "in all countries taking into account the different realities, capacities, and levels development of each one and respecting their national policies and priorities". The 2030 Agenda is proposed with full respect for the national regulatory context "for sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, but always in a manner compatible with the relevant international standards and commitments", recognizing the importance of the regional and subregional dimensions, which can make it easier to effectively translate sustainable development policies into concrete measures at the national level [26].

However, from a critical approach and despite the efforts to place the local area at the center of the proposal, the central role of the 2030 Agenda does not refer to what some call the "localization" of the Sustainable Development Goals [16]. Ulrich Beck [27] describes how reflexive modernity confronts society with global risks that require local responses, highlighting the importance of integrating these perspectives into the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

A territory is more than the mere geographical space in which economic or social activities occur. It is the set of actors and agents that inhabit it, with its social and political organization, culture and institutions, and a physical environment or environment [28]. This approach involves a crucial development actor incorporating different dimensions: the social and human development dimension; the institutional, political, and cultural

dimension; the economic, technological, and financial dimension; and the dimension of environmentally sustainable development. From a critical perspective, development emerges “from below” from the mobilization and commitment of the leading local actors whose presence is fundamental to achieving greater social cohesion in our societies. Starting from the social needs defined by civil society, without leaving anyone behind, from a focus on governance and democratic and supportive construction [29], and overcoming subsynthesis among subjectivity, citizenship, and emancipation were analyzed by Boaventura [30].

The integration of the 2030 Agenda as a local strategy implies recognizing the difficulties inherent to an extensive and complex agenda. However, it can serve as a strategic and programmatic framework that provides meaning and a shared purpose to all the regional, local, sectoral, and current initiatives. This would involve connecting the global agenda with the existing local planning and management tools, such as strategic plans, local economic development projects, and Agenda 21. In the current context, this connection implies aligning the 2030 Agenda with efforts to combat rural depopulation, climate change, and recovery and transformation programs. It is interesting to explore approaches based on territorial missions [31] that involve solid alliances between the public and private sectors, with broad citizen participation. This implies a significant transformation of the state and local administrations, opening them up and connecting them with territorial actors to generate value.

Each territory optimizes the learning acquired from its own historical experience, as well as the real resources and potential that its own culture possesses following a collective and internalized project that is defined according to its values and aspirations [19]. The construction of a structural framework as intended by the 2030 Agenda and these considerations must be addressed.

The possibilities of a solid and historically constituted social organization managing, conserving, and improving its relationship with the environment or ecosystem are determined by its nature; sustainability is a concept inherent to certain social formations and collective identities and must be considered. In this sense, Piqueras and Rizzardini provide us with a vision of the development of people in their territories that enables us to evaluate the approaches presented. As noted, “Development will exist when a self-centered construction is achieved, in which relations with the outside are subject to the logic of internal accumulation, with their dynamics in social relationships and cultural value systems. It is necessary to fight for the construction of a global collective social identity” [32].

This is why any structural initiative of a regulatory nature that does not account for these realities could cause imbalances and asymmetric relationships. The community with its cultural patterns exists (if the people themselves think that they are in it and that they are part of it); they feel it and internalize it, share it, and jointly construct their concept of a “we”. In this sense, Encina Domínguez tells us that “Experiences at the local level make it possible, due to the proximity between decision-making and the most concrete realities, that the people who inhabit them are the ones who design the future of their realities and contexts in an integrated and global way” [33].

Relatedly, Castells [34] maintains the following:

“Identities can be generated in dominant institutions; they only become such if social actors internalize them and construct their meaning around this internalization.”

The perspective of participation constitutes a way to strengthen civil society based on its own patterns and collective interests. This enables us to understand how the community cooperates in developing our society’s social capital and how this cooperation affects public and collective value construction. Accepting cultural diversity is essential when configuring a structural framework such as the 2030 Agenda [33].

The set of previous evaluations and assessments enables us to understand that respect for cultural diversity is a priority when developing a theoretical framework or roadmap since it constitutes the scenario in which any consented and accepted process that is conducted is articulated. This framework or roadmap is implemented from the organizational and communicational aspects and is defined by its contextuality and subjectivity [35].

In this sense, Moreno [35] maintains that, “along with the undoubted process of cultural uniformization, there is no less evident process of reaffirmation of specific cultures by the identity groups that are defined through them”.

1.4. Agenda 2030, Territories, and Knowledge Transfer: University and Intellectual Capital Are Spaces of Struggle for Human Dignity

The verification of the scientific and empirical evidence that refers to specific and diverse logics of collective behavior and social organization in the face of the processes of change constitutes clear indicators that the scientific community must address. The results of these investigations and the transfer of this knowledge can include precise tools to deepen and claim the defense of dignity and human rights. These elements constitute clear arguments that social intervention must address organized social behaviors.

It is essential to pay attention to the skills that social formations and collective identities possess to achieve understanding and control over the personal, social, economic, and political forces that influence people’s lives to improve their conditions. This is the case for the study carried out by Encina, Rosa, and Caraballo, who, among other contributions, state the following:

“It must be the subjects involved in the research contexts who, with their explanation and understanding of social problems and needs, point the direction and materialize the changes”. [36]

These investigations and studies reveal a tendency to evaluate the relationships of social, psychological, and cultural elements with participation. It is necessary to consider a comprehensive approach to studying the phenomenon of involvement, which combines several factors in its internal dynamics as a sociocultural process and social interaction. In this sense, the exchange of knowledge and interdisciplinary research offered by the university itself must be considered because this would be, as MaxNeef explains, “an effort to combine the micro and macro levels of society that would be mutually involved” [37].

This intellectual capital not only enables us to address social phenomena in a multidimensional way but also represents a unique opportunity to propose dignity and human rights as transversal elements of each of the contributions each intervening discipline can offer. In this way, the university will not only constitute that scenario that enables intellectual enrichment but will also and must be a critical, protesting, and fighting space against the violation of human rights and disregard for the importance of territories and sociocultural dynamics. This is developed in these territories, and the environmental impacts need to be included in the sustainable proposals from all possible academic disciplines. According to Sevilla Guzmán, “the approach would be to consider, as a central element, the forms of collective social action already existing at the local level, considering the use of endogenous resources as strategies” [38].

Collective practices are incessantly constructed and deconstructed if research is conducted in community spaces and specific sociocultural contexts. These practices are structured by socioeconomic and cultural circumstances that act and shape said behavior. Montero says, “The community members jointly develop capabilities and resources to control their life situation, acting in a committed, conscious, and critical manner to transform their environment according to their needs and aspirations, transforming themselves simultaneously” [39].

Social behavior is precisely one of the factors on which we must focus, and all the actors involved should negotiate these adaptive processes to develop sustainable growth models. This definition of “empowerment” must be accompanied by other factors that are part of the sociocultural context whose role is also relevant. Indeed, Díaz González [40] states that, in addition to “cultural development”, another concept must be considered: “integrated development”, which, according to this author, consists of the following:

“A holistic or systematic approach that tries to energize the socio-economic sectors of the area, or at least those that allow physical and human resources, considering their

interdependencies towards common objectives, achieving synthesis conclusions that facilitate decision-making under an integrative prism."

In this way, this article aims to analyze the academic speeches presented at the International Conference on Human Rights, Agenda 2030 and Territory held at the Pablo de Olavide University, reviewing the speeches by the attending academics with the methodology presented in the following sections.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Data Collection

2.1.1. The First International Conference on Critical Theories of Human Rights and Development

The research is framed in a specific academic framework: The First International Conference on Critical Theories of Human Rights and Development "Human Rights and Territories: debates on the 2030 Agenda".

This space arises in the context of deep-rooted academic excellence, driven by the solid positioning of the Master of Human Rights, Interculturality and Development (UPO-UNIA), which has more than two decades of experience as a reference in the critical paradigm and specifically in the critical theories of the Frankfurt School. Thus, these conferences are positioned as spaces for the exchange of ideas and knowledge, where human rights and local development are intertwined, crucial topics such as the 2030 Agenda and the right to the city, communication, art, culture, and memory are addressed, and both its positive aspects and the areas where absences and deficiencies are detected are highlighted. However, these conferences also represent the convergence of academics and professionals committed to a shared vision of the contemporary challenges in human rights and Agenda 2030, forming a group of experts, academics, and professionals who can influence and shape discussions, future policies, and approaches in this critical and vital field for society.

The choice of experts and speakers for these sessions is directly linked to this notion of the epistemic community. The careful selection of professionals with experience and specialized knowledge not only guarantees the quality of the debates and discussions but also grants legitimacy within the area of expertise of which they are part, in addition to marking the scope and generalizability of the results [41].

The concept of epistemic communities [5,42] comprises professionals with recognized competence and experience in a specific area. These conferences, by serving as a legitimized and recognized space that brings together experts and academics with deep knowledge of critical theories of human rights and development, form a network of individuals who share a coherent and founded vision of the challenges and perspectives at the intersection between human rights, development, and social criticism and can be considered an epistemic community.

2.1.2. Method Design and Procedures

The experts summoned for this conference were distributed according to their research profile into five discussion groups; in each of these groups, a dimension of the 2030 Agenda was addressed. The qualitative research technique of the discussion group fit perfectly with the research question of the study and with the space that had been built and in which the research process was to be developed since it is a technique that, as noted by Barros and Moreno [43], is useful for obtaining information about what the people who are involved in the research think, believe, and perceive. This is the specific topic with which this study is concerned.

The discussion groups were structured around central themes, represented by the five key dimensions of the 2030 Agenda: Planet, Prosperity, People, Alliances, and Peace. Each group focused on a specific open question that explored the connection between the 2030 Agenda and a particular aspect within the corresponding dimension. The discussions generated in the five groups were recorded on video, allowing their subsequent verbatim transcription for discourse analysis.

In each discussion group, a moderator energized the debate among the experts that constituted it, introducing them to the topic and asking them a specific and open question (Table 1), following the approach of Vallés [44]. This approach facilitated a discussion on the case that the corresponding question invited but also enabled issues that connected with it to be addressed, creating a completely free exchange among the participants [45].

Table 1. The questions posed in a focus group. Source: author’s own elaboration.

ODS Dimensions	Question
Prosperity	If there are connections, how does the 2030 Agenda connect to social/community/local intervention?
Peace	How do I connect the 2030 Agenda to art, memory, communication, and culture as the promoters of a critical development model?
Alliances	How does (if at all) the 2030 Agenda adapt to new governance models?
Planets	How to connect the 2030 Agenda to the generation of sustainable territories and cities?
People	In addition to the specific SDGs, how does the 2030 Agenda convey a decolonial and cross-gender look in the territories?

Table 1 shows the questions asked in each of the discussion groups. These questions were designed from a critical approach to the dimensions of the agenda, using concepts aligned with this paradigm, such as decolonialism, gender, culture, or social intervention.

2.1.3. Sociodemographic Profiles of the Participants

In this study, 25 experts from various universities, both national and international, were summoned. Of these, 23 were university academics and professionals from third-sector organizations, and 2 were activists from social movements and the third sector, all of whom were committed to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda at the local level. “Professionals” refer to individuals from third-sector organizations who contribute their expertise in various capacities.

There was representation of men and women among the participants; however, although there was general equality, there was a slight majority of males.

The participants were mainly from Spain and Latin America. However, there was also representation from European countries such as Portugal and Germany and from sub-Saharan Africa in the People discussion group.

All the groups were composed of people from academic research of recognized prestige. Therefore, most participants came from educational institutions such as universities and research groups. Additionally, some participants had dual roles as academics and professionals, or academics and activists, contributing their practical experience and insights. As we can see in Table 2, of the 25 experts, 21 were university academics, 1 was a worker of a third-sector organization who has no academic affiliation, and 3 participants had dual roles, belonging to university institutions while being workers in third-sector organizations or activists; one of them was an activist from social movements and the third sector.

Table 2. Sociodemographic characteristics. Source: author’s own elaboration.

Participant	Roles	Dual Role	Gender	Region	Age Range
1	University Academic	no	Female	Latin America	50–60
2	University Academic	no	Female	Europe	40–50
3	University Academic	no	Male	Europe	40–50
4	University Academic	no	Male	Latin America	50–60
5	University Academic	no	Male	Europe	40–50
6	Third-Sector Professional	no	Female	Europe	40–50
7	University Academic	no	Female	Europe	40–50

Table 2. Cont.

Participant	Roles	Dual Role	Gender	Region	Age Range
8	University Academic	no	Male	Europe	50–60
9	University Academic	no	Male	Europe	50–60
10	University Student	no	Female	Europe	20–30
11	University Academic/Third-Sector	yes	Male	Africa	40–50
12	University Academic	no	Female	Europe	40–50
13	Third-Sector Professional/Activist	yes	Female	Latin America	40–50
14	University Academic	no	Female	Europe	50–60
15	University Academic	no	Male	Europe	50–60
16	University Academic	no	Male	Latin America	50–60
17	University Academic	no	Female	Europe	50–60
18	University Academic/Activist	yes	Male	Europe	70–80
19	University Academic	no	Female	Latin America	50–60
20	University Academic	no	Male	Latin America	50–60
21	University Academic	no	Male	Europe	50–60
22	University Academic	no	Male	Europe	50–60
23	University Academic	no	Male	Europe	70–80
24	University Academic	no	Female	Latin America	40–50
25	University Academic	no	Male	Europe	40–50

The five discussion groups were composed as follows in Table 3: each group had 5 participants, ensuring equitable and diverse representation in each.

Table 3. Sociodemographic characteristics. Source: author’s own elaboration.

ODS Dimensions	Gender	Age Range	Geographic Origin	Institution
Prosperity	Women: 60% Men: 40%	20/40 years: 40% 40/60 years: 60% 60/+ years: 0%	Spain: 60% Rest of Europe: 0% Latin America: 40% Africa: 0%	Universities: 80% Institutions: 20%
Peace	Women: 20% Men: 80%	20/40 years: 0 40/60 years: 100% 60/+ years: 0	Spain: 40% Rest of Europe: 40% Latin America: 20%	Universities: 100% Institutions: 0%
Alliances	Women: 25% Men: 75%	20/40 years: 0 40/60 years: 50% 60/+ years: 50%	Spain: 75% Rest of Europe: 0% Latin America: 25% Africa: 0	Universities: 100% Institutions: 0%
Planets	Women 40% Men 60%	20/40 years: 0 40/60 years: 60% 60/+ years: 40%	Spain: 60% Rest of Europe: 0% Latin America: 40% Africa: 0%	Universities: 100% Institutions: 0%
People	Women: 75% Men: 25%	20/40 years: 0 40/60 years: 80% 60/+ years: 20%	Spain: 50% Rest of Europe: 0% Latin America: 25% Africa: 25%	Universities: 50% Institutions: 50%

Nevertheless, representatives from organizations that also worked in academic research also participated in the discussion groups regarding the People and Prosperity

dimensions. The institutions, in a percentage similar to that of the participants' origins, were diverse. A summary of the sociodemographic profiles of participants is represented in Table 3.

2.1.4. The Ethical Diamond

We apply a deductive approach using analysis categories already defined in Joaquín Herrera's ethical diamond [1]. This instrument, although designed and conceived by Joaquín Herrera, draws on the contributions of the cultural diamond proposed by Griswold [46], which enables us to theoretically structure our analysis robustly and make our view more complex by approaching the study of a multidimensional reality constructed by dominating and emancipatory interactions that exist in the processes of struggle for human dignity [47]. Human rights, observed from a critical and contextualized perspective, can result from struggles that overlap over time and are driven by theoretical categories (conceptual categories) and practical categories (material categories). In Tables 4 and 5, the definitions of the material and conceptual categories based on Delgado and Abellán [48] are presented.

Table 4. Definition of material categories. Source: author's own elaboration.

Material Categories	Definition
Productive Forces	Include all the things that make goods and services happen in one place, like the new technologies and tools we use to make things, or how we adapt to a constantly changing market.
Production Social Relations	They are the ways people work together to produce things. This includes how we get along and work in a world where the production of things is very important.
Provisions	They assess how people obtain the things they need and what role each person plays in this process.
Historicity	Social process derived from the causes of the history of the territory, or from the agents who participated or participate in it and how it currently affects society.
Social practices	Different ways of organizing and acting that have originated to intervene in favor of access to goods.
Development	Current process where economic and cultural social conditions are afforded that provide (or do not provide) access to the assets necessary for dignified life.

Table 5. Definition of conceptual categories. Source: author's own elaboration.

Conceptual Categories	Definition
Theories	Different ways to understand the specific process, fact, or phenomenon, determining the idea you can have. Ways to understand local development and the ideologies that make them up.
Values	"social preferences that are pervasive in a given environment of relationships by influencing how to access the assets needed to live dignified".
Spaces	geographical, human, or cultural places where social relationships take place, processes to be studied, etc.; the physical, social, political, economic, and symbolic framework where the relationships between objects (institutions, productive forces. . .) and actions (behaviors aimed at means and purposes given the moment of their history and about a common cultural area) are established. It plays an important role in orientations, choices, actions, and social outcomes.
Narratives	ways in which processes or territory are defined. The narratives will define the territory and its people and expose the legitimization of their rights or question their circumstances
Institutions	Standards, instances, and procedures that, when articulated in a hierarchical manner through bureaucracy, their ultimate objective is the resolution of a conflict or the needs of expectations within a framework of cultural and ideological interest.
Position	The social position individuals and communities occupy in social relations is critical to understanding how they access prosperity in terms of resources, opportunities, and social services. Analyzing the position of different groups in the community provides crucial information about equity and benefit distribution.

Considering the work already carried out in these areas that comprise the 12 layers of the ethical diamond of Professor Herrera Flores [1], as in the research studies conducted by Professors Bellerín [48], Delgado [49], or Tapia [50] in studies with a clear critical paradigm as the present study, we adopt the main categories of the ethical diamond as a methodological proposal of categories of analysis to critically approach the connection process between the 2030 Agenda and the construction of sustainable territories.

2.2. Data Analysis

In our study, we conducted a discourse analysis after collecting data through discussion groups, opting for the ATLAS.ti 23 software package.

Discourse analysis is widely used in qualitative research. There are many techniques for implementing and developing this method, allowing for an impartial, systematic, and quantitative examination of communicative material [51]. This technique is commonly used to study topics from different areas of knowledge, including the 2030 Agenda [41,51]. This approach is emerging as an alternative for organizing the opinions expressed by experts during group exchanges through discourse analysis, such as argument mining. The latter is based on a corpus that aims to automatically identify a speech's argumentative structures.

This methodology is equipped with instruments that have advanced spectacularly in the last decade with the design of software packages for qualitative analysis, such as Nvivo, ATLAS.ti, or MAXQDA, which allow the management of big data of very diverse origins and, therefore, facilitate their analysis. Furthermore, and this has been a definitive criterion when opting for ATLAS.ti, in the most recent updates of the ATLAS.ti and MAXQDA, a new, very powerful function based on AI has been introduced, specifically in the latest version of ATLAS.ti 23. With this tool, it is possible to perform automatic coding instead of manual coding of user data. However, although this new functionality saves time in the coding process of materials and documents, the researcher must be aware that this automatic coding process is limited by the number of main categories [52,53]; therefore, the supervisory work of the researcher is essential after the result is obtained when using this new function. ATLAS.ti offers robust tools that make it easy to automate detailed analysis processes of large amounts of data and identify patterns, trends, and relationships between coded elements [54], making it an essential and efficient tool for analysis of the discourse proposed in our study.

Before the data collected from the focus groups were analyzed, the video recordings were transcribed verbatim. The data analysis was carried out following a two-phase process (based on the three-phase model of "pre-analysis, material exploration and treatment of results, inference, and interpretation" [53] that has been meticulously documented to be transparent and reproducible).

The verbatim transcriptions were uploaded to ATLAS.ti. This procedure included importing the focus group transcripts and code identification using artificial intelligence (AI) tools in ATLAS.ti. The discussion focused on the choice of codes and the search for methodological references that supported this decision.

The next stage consisted of manual verification of the codes identified by the AI, which was addressed after determining the main themes and manually monitoring whether the specified codes were coherent and relevant to the research.

To address the need to present original research findings, we expanded our data analysis section to include summaries of the discussions and critical interpretations that highlight connections, discrepancies, and new perspectives emerging from the debate. This ensures that our study not only documents but also critically analyzes and evaluates the content discussed at the conference.

In addition to identifying and categorizing the codes, we conducted an interpretative analysis to better understand the emerging connections and discrepancies. This critical analysis allowed us to identify new perspectives that enrich the understanding of the analyzed discourses and offer deeper insight into the underlying dynamics.

This manual supervision process was essential for ensuring that the results were not assumed without being contrasted and thus ensuring their validity and representativeness regarding the content of the discussions. After the codes were obtained, possible redundancies were reviewed, and the codes were combined into categories as appropriate to simplify the analysis.

Specific precautions were established to ensure the rigor and validity of the process. A clear definition of the categories occurred, supported by consensus among the authors in understanding each category and code generated by the AI in ATLAS.ti, thus simplifying the subsequent analysis.

To enhance the robustness of our findings, we employed data triangulation by comparing and contrasting the discussion group data with other sources, such as the existing literature. This triangulation helped to validate the insights drawn from the discourse analysis and ensured a comprehensive understanding of the research topic.

In addition to qualitative discourse analysis, we integrated quantitative methods, such as statistical analysis of coded data, to quantify the prevalence of certain themes and codes. This mixed-methods approach provided a richer, more nuanced picture of the data and allowed for a more rigorous validation of our qualitative findings.

We implemented participant validation, also known as member checking, where preliminary findings were shared with participants for feedback. This step ensured that our interpretations accurately reflected the participants' perspectives and added credibility to our analysis.

To ensure thoroughness, we continued data collection and analysis until thematic saturation was achieved, meaning no new themes or insights were emerging from the data. This approach ensured that our analysis was comprehensive and captured the full range of perspectives within the discussion groups.

"The human coding process, characteristic of qualitative methods, entails a degree of subjectivity due to the diversity of synonyms and expressions that can correspond to the same idea". This aspect was highlighted in the research, supported by the preexisting impossibility of determining exactly which terms correspond to each category [41].

In the second phase, the researchers crossed the 12 ethical diamond layers with the categories identified with ATLAS.ti. The integration of the results to map the dimensions of the 2030 Agenda with the corresponding layers of the ethical diamond was proposed as a crucial stage. Peer review was recommended among the study researchers, who were seeking feedback to strengthen the conclusions. In Figure 2, the research process is represented.

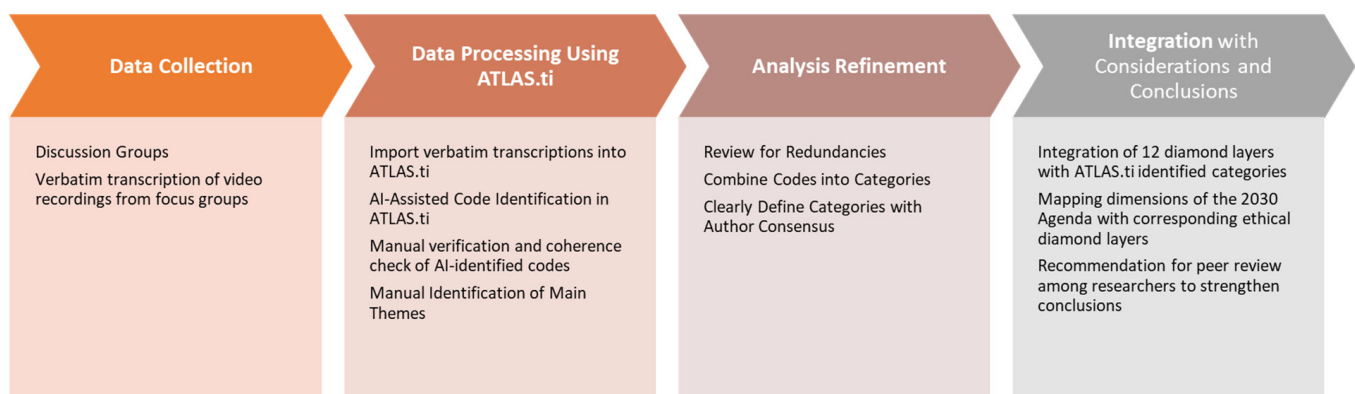


Figure 2. Steps in the research process. Source: author's own elaboration.

3. Results

As aforementioned, this article aims to conduct an analysis of the discourse of academic intellectuals who work on and research development studies from a comprehensive perspective. This analysis was based on reviewing the five discussion groups, identifying the key elements of those speeches, and subsequently debating the results of the speeches using the ethical diamond of Herrera Flores [55].

3.1. Results of Principal Codes in the Dimensions of the SDGs

For each dimension, we present a detailed breakdown of the main identified codes, providing specific examples from the discussions that illustrate these codes. This allows for a more granular understanding of how the themes manifested in the discussion groups. Regarding the results obtained in the analysis of the discourse presented in the methodology section of each discussion group of each dimension of the SDGs, distinct items were generated and grouped based on the relationships between themselves in the following principal codes by each dimension, as presented in Table 6. The numbers in the table represent the number of times a specific theme/code was mentioned and discussed by the participants.

Table 6. Codes obtained from speech analysis.

Prosperity	Peace	Alliances	Planet	People
If there are connections, how does the 2030 Agenda connect to social/community/local intervention?	How do you connect the 2030 Agenda to art, memory, communication and culture as the promoters of a critical development model?	How does (if at all) the 2030 Agenda adapt to new governance models?	How to connect the 2030 Agenda to the generation of sustainable territories and cities?	In addition to the specific SDGs, how does the 2030 Agenda convey a decolonial and cross-gender view across territories?
Social changes 4 Skills and Skills 11 Cultural Context 3 Social inequality 21 Community Involvement 30 Economic Poverty 6 Social Work 25	Film and Social Change 3 Territory Context 16 International cooperation 7 Humanitarian Crisis 3 Misinformation 6 Political Speech 4 Social Policy 7 Theories 3 Violence 9	Actors 12 Territorial Development 23 Activism 20 Governance 18 Innovation 5 Research 4 Citizen Participation 16 Public Policies 14 Resources 4 Networks 4	Social criticism 12 Sustainable Development 36 Sustainable Urban Development 31 Socioeconomic inequality 21 Transparency 13 Public Management 29 International relations 8	Human Rights 19 Identity 25 Feminism 26 Environment 10 Social Justice 20 Territory 10 Gender Violence 29

Once the results are presented in the Table 6, each dimension is shown with percentage graphs to provide a clear and specific vision of each discussion group's principal codes.

3.2. Prosperity Dimension Results

According to the results obtained in the discussion group on the Prosperity dimension, where a question focused on the connection between the SDGs and communities was established, the results were as follows in Figure 3:

1. *Community participation, work, and social inequalities* stand out above the rest, considering that community social intervention professionals constituted the majority of this group and actively participated.
2. *Economic poverty, capacities and abilities, and social changes* also relate to the three previous items, and nuances within them are established. Nevertheless, they strengthen key concepts such as *community* and *social well-being*.
3. Finally, the cultural context is an important concept for analyzing and reviewing the prosperity of each society in different contexts and territorial spaces.

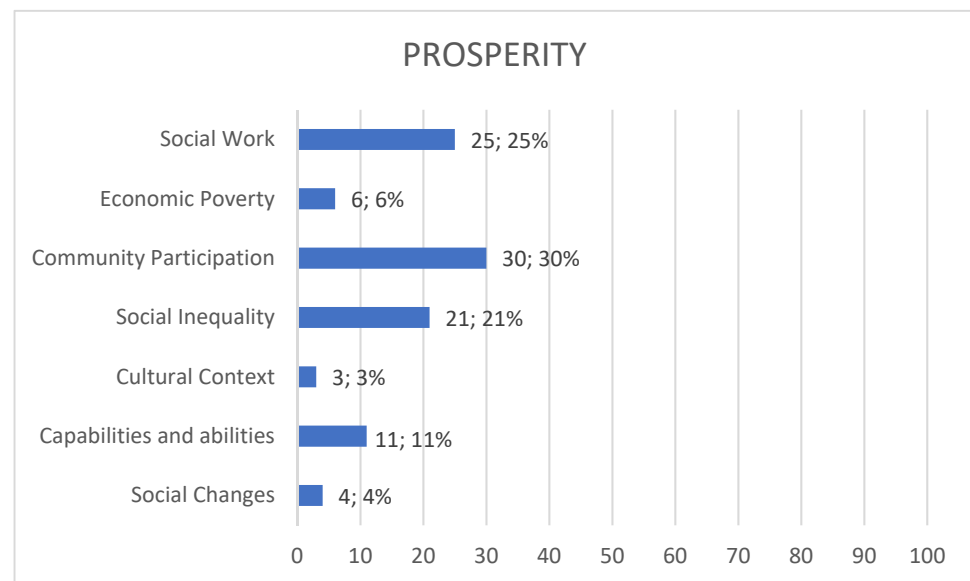


Figure 3. Prosperity. Source: author's own elaboration.

3.3. Peace Dimension Results

In the Peace discussion group, where the discussion question was oriented to the culture of Peace, more codes were established than in the Prosperity dimension, as you can see in Figure 4.

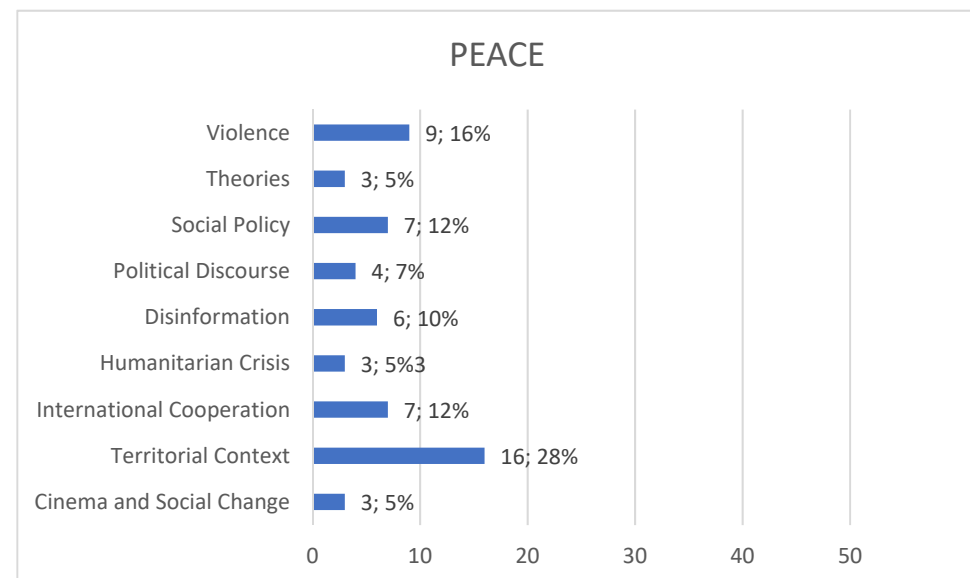


Figure 4. Peace. Source: author's own elaboration.

1. *Territorial context, violence, and international cooperation*, or elements that were grouped in these codes, were the most common codes in the discussion. This group of people also established workspaces in the cultural field and international cooperation; therefore, the context is once again considered an element of this dimension.
2. *Disinformation, social policy, and political discourse* are also established as essential axes in this dimension since politics are understood to be fundamental elements in developing this dimension of the agenda, and the media or the media relationship is directly related to the political strategies.
3. *Theories, cinema, social change, and humanitarian crises* appear in similar percentages, although each one is for several reasons. Theories are established by the importance

of the paradigm with which reality is observed to develop a culture of peace. Cinema and social change are found in the need for cinema as art, communication, and culture for promotion and as processes that generate values of peace. At the same time, the humanitarian crisis is set directly in opposition to the Peace discourse to show why a culture of peace is necessary for the 2030 Agenda.

3.4. Alliances Dimension Results

In the Alliances discussion group, a discussion question about new governance models was established, and, as observed in Figure 5, the results obtained revolve around this concept.

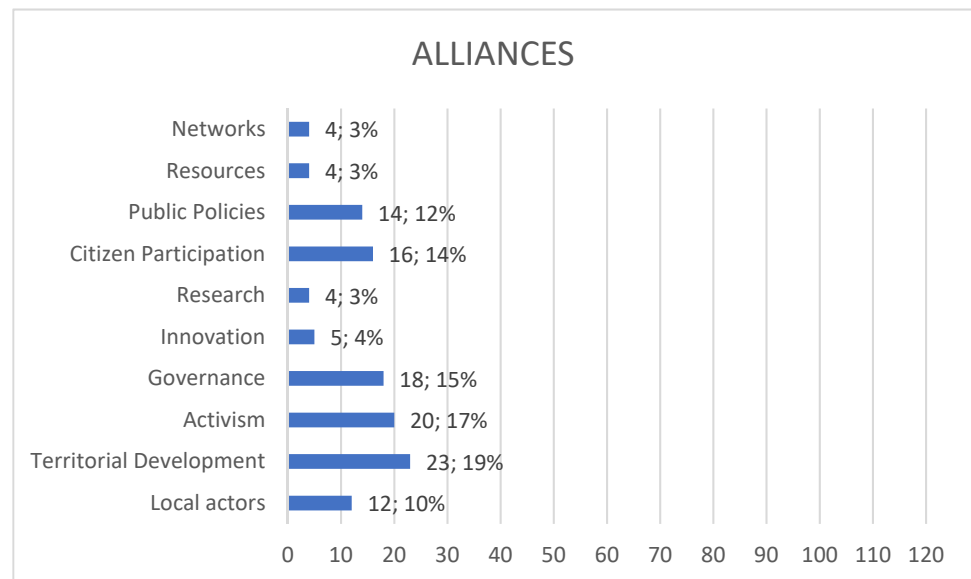


Figure 5. Alliances. Source: author's own elaboration.

1. *Governance, activism, and territorial development* are established as the most named codes directly or through the concepts brought together in this criterion. Both *governance and territorial development* are directly related to new models or processes of territorial management, where the concept of *territorial development* is related.
2. *Citizen participation* is in line with the abovementioned concept of *activism*, but, this time, it is more linked to democratic participation in governance spaces and through another concept named *public policies*, which are at the same level as the *local actors* of the territory.
3. *Research and innovation* appear to a lesser extent but also serve as *resources* for new governance that enables alliances. At the same level, *networks* and *resources* will enable us to glimpse the need to establish new meeting spaces to generate more democratic models of governance and, therefore, the need for resources to improve these processes.

3.5. Planet Dimension Results

In the Planet dimension, the discussion group debated sustainability in territorial spaces, such as communities or cities. Based on the focal question, various codes that also appeared transversally in the rest of the discussion groups were established as you can see in Figure 6.

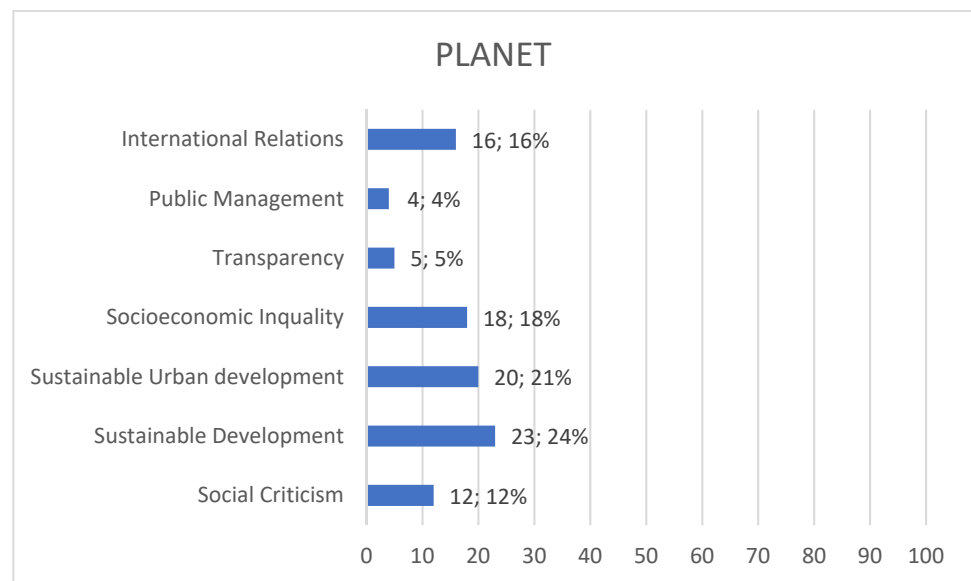


Figure 6. Planet. Source: author's own elaboration.

1. Most of the time, in this discussion space, the codes of *sustainable development*, *sustainable urban development*, and *socioeconomic inequality* stand out above the rest, putting communities and territories at the center and establishing social inequality in opposition to the concept of sustainable development itself.
2. *Social criticism* later appears, establishing citizens as necessary agents to develop critical discourses based on hegemonic development. On the other hand, *international relations* are crucial due to the importance of climate change in all the territories of the planet and the necessity of articulation not only from national governments but also at the local level and in social movements.
3. Finally, there are two elements related to *public management*, precisely this concept and *transparency*, understanding local and territorial governments as spaces for generating critical and sustainable development through a direct relationship with the most natural and transparent citizens.

3.6. Results for the People Dimension

In the People dimension, the discussion group debated two main elements from a critical paradigm: decolonialism and gender. At the table, the central question involved how the agenda should address the migration processes from these perspectives, and several codes closely related to both elements were established, as you can see in Figure 7.

1. *Gender violence, identity, and feminism* are three codes based on almost 60% of the discussion group debate, establishing the central need to develop identity-based and decolonial feminism from the 2030 Agenda beyond the SDGs set by the agenda itself.
2. *Social justice and human rights* appear later, establishing human rights as a necessary tool for establishing the processes of the struggle for dignity in different territories with various problems that relapse into sexist and racial violence in one way or another.
3. *Territory and environment* also appear to a lesser extent since, as in the previous dimensions, the importance of the territorialization of the agenda and sustainable development in all the identity processes has been highlighted in the tables in a transversal manner.

Once the results of the different discussion groups have been presented and the discourse analysis has been conducted, the results are combined with the ethical diamond of Herrera Flores, enabling the establishment of a direct connection between the 2030 Agenda and the critical theories of human rights under a critical paradigm.

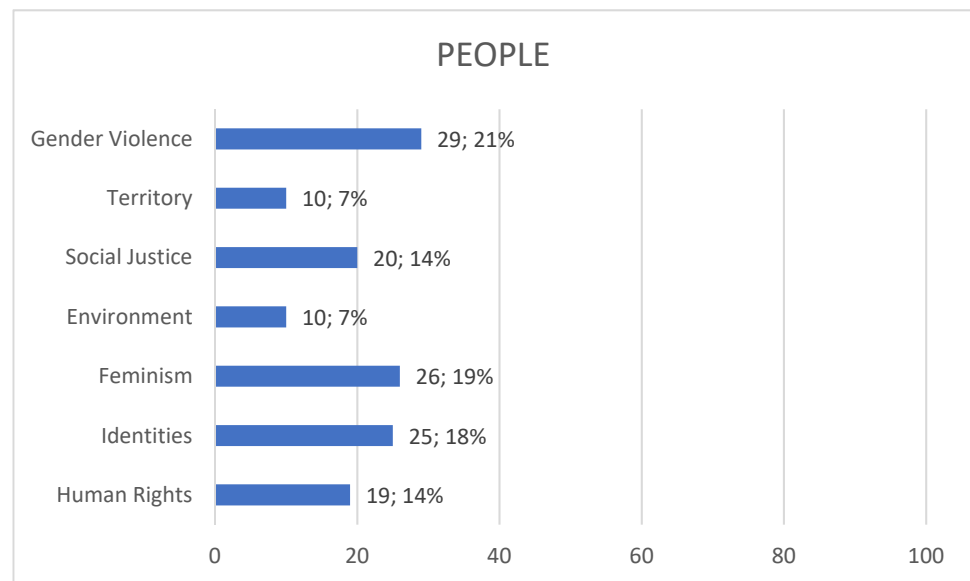


Figure 7. People. Source: author’s own elaboration.

3.7. Intellectual Capital vs. Ethical Diamond

Once the discourse analysis has been conducted, a direct relationship with the layers of the ethical diamond is established; this is accomplished through a conceptual analysis of the codes and their relationship with the different layers of the diamond. Through this process, the main ethical values represented in the discourse are identified and how these are reflected in the underlying practices and decisions, providing a comprehensive view of the coherence or dissonances between the language used and the ethical principles of the diamond. This correlation helps to discern the depth and authenticity of the expressed ethical commitments, offering a deeper perspective on the integrity and ethical challenges faced by individuals or entities analyzed in the context of Agenda 2030. For researchers, it has been essential to connect the set of layers with the five dimensions, understanding that, a priori, all the layers are related to them. Nevertheless, this article aims to delimit the most direct relationships between the precisely conceptual and methodological elements: the ethical diamond and the five dimensions of the SDGs. The results obtained are reflected in the following Table 7:

Table 7. Results crossing 5 Ps dimensions and ethical diamond layers. Source: author’s own elaboration.

Dimension	Prosperity	Peace	Alliances	Planet	People
Question table discussion	If there are connections, how does the 2030 Agenda connect to social/community/local intervention?	How do I connect the 2030 Agenda to art, memory, communication and culture as the promoters of a critical development model?	How does (if at all) the 2030 Agenda adapt to new governance models?	How to connect the 2030 agenda to the generation of sustainable territories and cities?	In addition to the specific SDGs, how does the 2030 Agenda convey a decolonial and cross-gender view across territories?
Codes detected in speech analysis	Social changes 4 Skills and Skills 11 Cultural Context 3 Social inequality 21 Community Involvement 30 Economic Poverty 6 Social Work 25	Film and Social Change 3 Territory Context 16 International cooperation 7 Humanitarian Crisis 3 Misinformation 6 Political Speech 4 Social Policy 7 Theories 3 Violence 9	Actors 12 Territorial Development 23 Activism 20 Governance 18 Innovation 5 Research 4 Citizen Participation 16 Public Policies 14 Resources 4 Networks 4	Social criticism 12 Sustainable Development 36 Sustainable Urban Development 31 Socioeconomic inequality 21 Transparency 13 Public Management 29 International relations 8	Human Rights 19 Identity 25 Feminism 26 Environment 10 Social Justice 20 Territory 10 Gender Violence 29
Ethical diamond layers	Conceptual: spaces Material: social practices	Conceptual: narratives Material: provisions	Conceptual: relationships socials Material: institutions	Conceptual: positions Material: productive forces	Conceptual: historicity Material: values
Ethical diamond cross-layers	CONCEPTUAL: THEORIES			MATERIAL: DEVELOPMENT	

Below, the results are represented in Figure 8, which provides better visibility for the results obtained in this study:

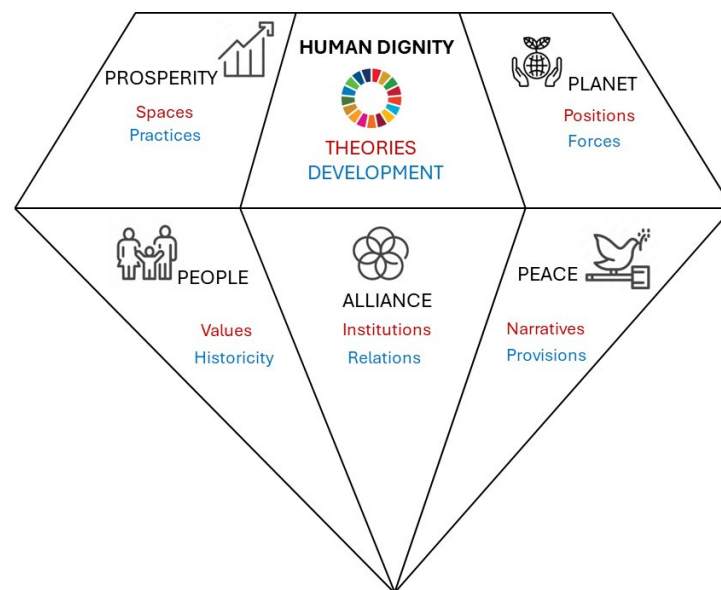


Figure 8. Layers of ethical diamond distributed in each 5 Ps dimension. Source: author's own elaboration.

In the graph, a diamond is shown, and, in each part, a dimension contains the layers that have been related after the discourse analysis. In the center of the diamond, the transversal elements, in this case, human dignity, and specifically the relationship to the 2030 Agenda, are the layers of theories and development.

The theoretical reasons for this final result are presented in the following section.

4. Discussion

The criteria that were found in the five discussion groups, related to the five dimensions of the SDGs, were grouped in the different layers of the ethical diamond, accounting for Herrera Flores' various definitions of each layer [1], and the adaptation of the same ethical diamond to the concept of development by Delgado Baena and Abellán Muñoz [56] contains the layers that have been related after the analysis of the discourse.

4.1. Transversal Layers

First, the layers of the conceptual axis Theories and the layer of the material axis Development correspond to the five dimensions of the SDGs because, in all the discussion group tables, they worked from the theoretical field (academic/intellectual), and, in all the tables, the topics of sustainable development were addressed. However, each one is also established in a particular way, as discussed below.

- **Theories:** The criticism of the neoliberal basis of the 2030 Agenda implies the presence of alternative theories that question the hegemonic approach of the model and the adoption of specific theories on how economic and social relations should be organized. The defense of an approach based on justice and the reconfiguration of power relations requires ethical and political theories that influence the understanding of how social relations should be structured, not only the material distribution but also the underlying power dynamics. The proposal of "New Governance" from a governance and democratic and supportive construction perspective implies adopting theories on how it should be organized "from below" without leaving anyone behind, with the participation of civil society. This also includes the participation of specific territories, which implies social and public innovation that transforms the logic and structures of government and the way in which the different actors must interact in terms of

decision-making to achieve greater social cohesion in our societies. This is also related to the emancipatory critical reflection that highlights the importance of exploring and adopting theories beyond the conventional ones, opening theory to historical and social reality, and the importance of an ethics that goes beyond mere denunciation and enables the building of alternatives. However, as Morin proposed, overcoming and transcending hegemonic theoretical and practical proposals is necessary to begin to conceive transformations: “the still invisible and inconceivable metamorphosis” [36]. This intellectual challenge is even more urgent when we recognize that the multiple crises we are experiencing result from a way of knowing; they are the result of an “intelligence that we respect and admire” [57]. This compromises the need to think from different perspectives and recognize diverse realities and indicates the importance of an ethics that embraces diversity and complexity in the generation of theories that illuminate the processes and models of socioecological transition and regeneration of ecosystems in urban and rural territories. Information and communication theories are crucial for understanding how misinformation can impact agenda fulfilment. Cristina Sala Valdés [58] calls the weight of communication and information in the 2030 Agenda irrelevant since they focus mainly on a more “instrumental” conception of communication, far from the broad, transversal, and co-responsible approach. For development, social change or a transformative vocation are necessary [59].

- **Development:** The 2030 Agenda and the need to find emancipatory criteria to adjust solutions to real needs necessarily imply addressing development. However, a classic or neutral perspective was presented as a “myth” by Gilbert Rist [2], so criticism, which would mean putting development as a process of human dignity at the center of the debate, should be employed [56]. Making visible and debating the emancipatory dynamics and struggle for human dignity should be the basis of any proposal for development from a critical human rights perspective. Generating new development models is an exercise in fighting for people’s dignity [1]. From this critical perspective, the construction of otherness involves a dialogue with the context, with the territory, and with time and specific space, situating a person in their historicity within a culture of solidarity that values the uniqueness and diversity of humanity, recognizing the enormous potential for social transformation. Sustainable development theory and practice are intrinsically related to peace, considering how stability, cohesion, and social justice depend on a model that aspires to equitable and sustainable development. In the context of the 2030 Agenda, the “Theories” dimension significantly influences the conceptualization and practice of “Development”. Critical theories provide the conceptual and philosophical framework for understanding development critically, questioning hegemonic paradigms and proposing alterities to the development model. Similarly, we highlight the centrality of a critical proposal that focuses on promoting values such as social justice, participation, solidarity, and peace, the basis of an ethical and political proposal for transformation that embraces the diversity and complexity in society and the generation of sustainable development alternatives pivoting on human dignity.

Once the transversal layers have been exposed to all the dimensions, each dimension will be revealed with its respective layers:

4.2. Prosperity

- **Theoretical Layer: Social Practices.** The participation, involvement, and motivation of different social actors are essential elements that constitute the necessary empowerment as an instrument to combat social inequalities. A critical theory in social practices that includes community participation involves a search for the transformation of unjust social structures and must underlie the objectives of the 2030 Agenda; this is built upon approaches that question systemic inequalities and promote equity and social justice. These considerations form critical approaches that contribute to the development of our society’s social capital, assuming the existence of new political

and social scenarios necessary for the understanding of dignity and the defense of human rights.

- **Conceptual Layer: Spaces.** From a critical perspective, we seek to understand how power structures and cultural dynamics influence the unequal distribution of resources and opportunities in different geographical spaces and cultural contexts [60]. In this sense, it is necessary to build a structural framework that responds to the social needs of the communities that live in territories, considering the specificities and diversities of the cultural projects themselves, which respond to sustainability patterns, capacities, and abilities. Space is, in turn, influenced and shaped by social relationships and organizations [61]. In this sense, Moreno [35] maintains that “along with the undoubted process of cultural uniformization, there operates the no less evident process of reaffirmation of specific cultures by the identity groups defined through them. Identity primarily implies belonging to a territory and a common culture, which defines and grants a specific entity to the group”. Integrating these variables from a critical analysis makes it possible to address inequalities in a more comprehensive and contextualized way in the structural and regulatory framework of the 2030 Agenda.

4.3. People

- **Theoretical Layer: Historicity.** The analysis of social aspects such as participation and social organization must be considered in connection to the historical and cultural processes. On some occasions, the evolution and advancement of social organization have involved internal debates that are not exempt from social conflict and processes of struggle and demands in the face of social inequalities. In any case, Díaz González suggests that “people or members of communities are characterized by believing in their capabilities and possibilities to carry out successive proposals and decisions” [40]. According to critical theory, “development” must be analyzed comprehensively, and historicity in discussions about people in the dimensions of the 2030 Agenda also implies recognizing the historical structures and practices that have contributed to the current inequalities. This is why knowledge, particularly about history, facilitates a deeper understanding of the future of social organizations, an analysis of the origins of problems, and guidance towards more transformative and equitable interventions.
- **Conceptual Layer: Values:** This layer involves the consideration of ethical and moral principles in making decisions that involve the transformation of social structures and practices. From a critical perspective, we are committed to changing those values rooted in unjust systems and promoting those that promote equity, justice, and sustainability. This also entails considering the existence of internal debates in communities around sustainability, cultural identity, and gender through processes of collective negotiation and construction that must be accompanied by specialized technical personnel. Community social intervention must consider the values that underlie it and are developed, accompanying these processes that pursue dignity and the defense of human rights within the framework of the 2030 Agenda.

4.4. Peace

- **Material Axis: Provisions.** Encouraging and allowing people to contribute, individually or collectively, expands the resources for development and encourages human ingenuity for innovation [62]. Awareness regarding peacebuilding is deeply influenced by the territorial context in which it is developed, affecting how peace issues are addressed and understood. In this framework, we understand cinema (and other artistic manifestations) as a tool for raising awareness and experimenting with our role in social change, reinforcing the organizational and communicative practices that can influence the construction of peace and ways of peaceful coexistence of our societies, building alterities [63] and nurseries of hope and materializing in other local, plural economies, in other historicities and narratives, in other actors, and in other ways of belonging and taking part. A conscious commitment to a peaceful society and

democratic coexistence is reinforced and enhanced through social public policies, especially those focused on resolving inequalities and mitigating humanitarian crises and violence. It cannot be forgotten that this proposed roadmap towards models of more just, supportive, sustainable, and peaceful societies represents a proposal with a clear vocation to transform individual and collective consciences, behaviors, narratives, and practices. This would imply a change in attitude and aptitude that can only come from conviction and knowledge. Moreover, this involves learning to connect with one's agenda, with the capacity for transformation, and with other people so that we finally believe that we can and are capable of transforming things [64].

- **Conceptual Axis: Narratives.** Narratives are essential for a society that aspires to peaceful and democratic coexistence and to counteract the impact of misinformation and distortion on peace. They focus on "how we are defined, and which tells us how we should participate in social relations" [1]. However, [58] calls the weight of communication and information in the 2030 Agenda irrelevant since they focus mainly on a more "instrumental" conception of communication, far from a broad, transversal, coresponsible approach to communication for development, social change, or with a transformative vocation [59]. The promotion of peace in our societies implies a commitment to the promotion of the values and principles of solidarity and peace, which are the basis of the narratives that can guide, sustain, and provide coherence to the social practices of transformation and emancipation that must be recognized and made visible in the political discourse on issues of peace, violence, and sustainable development. The above can be specified in the necessary construction and promotion of a narrative based on the "culture of solidarity", that is, one that generates values and practices to create and promote social justice and improve the life and dignity of other people, organizations, and territories that do not necessarily share the same goals or objectives, from the commitment and coresponsibility of the actors with a shared space and from the measures that ensure social cohesion, when the application of norms, rights, and obligations fails to apply to all citizens. Narratives highlighting real ties and promoting social peace are essential for counteracting denialist narratives and promoting a more inclusive and sustainable approach.

4.5. Alliances

- **Material Axis: Social Relations of Production.** The tensions in democracy, the shift towards market societies [65], and the crisis in various areas (ecological, demographic, political, and ethical) can be understood as manifestations of the social relations of production understood in regard to not only the production of material goods but also the way in which people interact in the configuration of society. From a critical human rights theory perspective, thinking about alliances for transformation requires analyzing the unequal distribution of power, the way this affects the configuration of society, and the opportunities for accessing the goods necessary to have a dignified life. This implies rethinking the social market relations and generating new leadership and exciting projects that alter how people relate and collaborate to access goods and services. This might seem like an illusion, but "there already exists, on all continents, a creative effervescence, a multitude of local initiatives in the sense of economic, social, political, cognitive, educational, ethnic regeneration, or life reform" [66].
- **Conceptual Axis: Institutions.** Moulaert and Nussbaumer [67] note that the ability to face new challenges and problems results from collective network learning processes in which each agent shares their knowledge with the rest to cogenerate new capabilities. This implies the ability to involve diverse agents in these processes. From governance, democratic, and supportive perspectives, this implies the adoption of new institutionality "from below", leaving no one behind. The new institutionality would work consciously regarding the framework of rules and norms that constitutes the power in the territory and the community, assuming that it is part of the changes that are essential to break the asymmetries or inequalities of power. Working under

the logic of alliances implies a transformative political, technical, and institutional culture and expresses it. It is an everyday creation that crosses the institutional and personal spaces of existence and work. This implies a new culture and way of being and doing things. It involves “weaving” relationships, learning, complicities, and advancing “from knot to knot” until establishing a standard, open, and diversified space in which new initiatives, proposals, and efforts are undertaken [68]. The new governance works consciously within this framework, assuming that it is part of the transformations necessary to generate development, sustainability, well-being, and justice. In short, this is conscious democracy.

4.6. Planet

- **Material Axis: Productive Forces.** The 2030 Agenda and the need to find emancipatory criteria to adjust solutions to real needs, especially related to the biosphere, necessarily imply addressing the productive forces in the sense proposed by Joaquín Herrera Flores, that of focusing on the generation of human dignity and wealth. Development involves debating the emancipatory dynamics and struggle for human dignity and, therefore, advocating for creating spaces that encourage the formulation of new alternative development models as tools of the fight for people’s dignity [1]. The destruction of the biosphere and realities such as poverty, inequality, and inequity are evidence of the brutal results of the capitalist system in its globalization and extractive phase: “they frequently originate in forms of knowledge and intelligence that we respect and admire” [57]. These destructions and expulsions are produced through complex systems of knowledge and techniques, including legal, financial, or engineering aspects. These technologies and innovations have not been at the service of the sustainable development processes of a transformative nature. It is essential to “get rid of the reductive alternatives that the world of knowledge and hegemonic thought forces us to” [67] and propose the construction of alterities, which would entail a careful relationship where a dialogue with the context, with the territory, would occur. With time and specific space, the biosphere and human beings are placed on another level of relationship.
- **Conceptual Axis: Positions.** A critical analysis of positions implies considering the need to think from a perspective of difference and recognize diverse realities, embracing the diversity and complexity in generating initiatives that illuminate the processes and models of socioecological transition and ecosystem regeneration in urban and rural territories. The proposals and responses developed thus far within the framework of the 2030 Agenda do not seem to be as effective as expected. Hence, the urgency of working on emancipatory criteria, beyond denial or denunciation, breaks or overcomes the restrictions imposed by the neoliberal model that has been imposed under the paradigm of “There are no alternatives” [69]. A position is necessary for critical reflection, a reflection that invites us to imagine and discover gaps, fissures, and inconsistencies in the hegemonic system. A consciousness that enables “thinking differently [...] opening loopholes to what was previously considered valuable” is needed [63]. Faced with denialist positions, it may be more effective to direct our efforts towards the promotion of transformative public policies and concrete actions that address climate change and promote equality, working with those actors who are in positions of collaboration and intervention towards a sustainable and fair future with transparency and democratic and supportive governance models. It is necessary to design transformative innovation policies for sustainable and inclusive development through systemic changes in the sociotechnical systems, which implies a scope ranging from a change in thinking to the generation of synergies and the acceleration of transformation, addressing various aspects to achieve sustainable development. Sustainability can be achieved at the global and local levels through the collaboration of different allied actors. In brief, adopting a critical, emancipatory, and reflective position towards the 2030 Agenda, the hegemonic model, and established theories is necessary. It is

essential to have a position that enables the generation of a critical consciousness that recognizes differences while aspiring to the collaboration of actors (“leaving no one behind”) and seeking emancipatory criteria to address crises effectively.

5. Conclusions

This article analyzed the discourse of five discussion groups of academic intellectuals who studied the five dimensions of the 2030 Agenda from a critical paradigm. These academics belonged to different academic and research institutions at an international level, with a greater emphasis on Latin America and Europe. However, there was also representation from African countries and topics linked to different international territories.

The results obtained were analyzed to answer the following research question: can the 2030 Agenda be related to critical development and human rights from academic intellectual capital? Although this approach implies analyzing the agenda from a critical paradigm, the answer is undoubtedly affirmative since the agenda itself is an opportunity to generate processes of human dignity, understanding development as a critical concept that requires having human rights as processes of fighting for dignity.

Although the answer is affirmative, there is a perceived need to establish the 2030 Agenda beyond the limitations of human development itself, understanding development as a cultural concept, which is determined by the territories themselves and the participation of citizens within their diversity to build more sustainable, healthy, and participatory communities.

To reinforce the results obtained with a greater emphasis on the critical paradigm of human rights, development, and territories, the following key points are proposed for researchers and social scientists:

- Human rights and human dignity: When talking about human rights, it is crucial to start from a perspective that is not “normative” or implying norms but rather a comprehensive vision that enables us to understand human rights as processes of struggling for human dignity that include different aspects, such as those shown in Herrera Flores’ ethical diamond.
- Critical development: When discussing the 2030 Agenda, greater emphasis is being placed on achieving the agenda and the importance of its implementation than on questioning the concept of development. University and intellectual capital must address this agenda by debating and discussing the concept of development itself since, on the contrary, it could seem that the agenda hinders academic debate due to the tremendous global consensus, preventing the constant review of the concept of hegemonic development.
- Knowledge supporting transformations: From a critical perspective, we must reflect on and propose a coherent relational model between the challenges we face and the cogeneration of knowledge that responds effectively to them. We must generate theories that promote transformative social innovations in all areas, including models of the democratic and supportive governance of development, capable of “lighting matches in the dark” and, thus, contributing to fruitful practices of transformation. In this sense, all the actors are encouraged to provide answers, especially in the university and academic sphere.
- Territorialization and cultural diversity: From a critical paradigm, the 2030 Agenda cannot address global “development” since the existing cultural and territorial diversity requires different concepts of “development” that are not similar and, therefore, require various implementation tools. An idea that should be universal is that of human dignity, which is framed in human rights and critical theories.
- Participation and the construction of citizenship: Critical development must constantly and transversally consider social participation to construct active, empowered, and supportive citizens. The 2030 Agenda must consider the participation in the agenda construction process and include citizen participation in all the territorialization and implementation processes.

- **Research contribution:** This methodology has allowed us not only to conduct a discourse analysis but also to interpret how the critical paradigm is intertwined and manifested in concrete practices within the field of human rights and sustainable development. Thus, the results of the present study provide an in-depth view of how human rights and development are conceptualized and put into practice within a critical epistemic community. By employing a concrete paradigm with specific critical tools such as the ethical diamond, it has been possible to answer the basic research question that follows: does critical academic intellectual capital understand the 2030 Agenda as a tool for critical development?

This study provides significant theoretical and practical contributions by elucidating how critical development and human rights can be effectively integrated within the framework of the 2030 Agenda. The findings highlight the necessity of incorporating cultural and territorial diversity into sustainable development practices. This research underscores the importance of a critical paradigm in fostering transformative social innovations and emphasizes the role of academic intellectual capital in shaping future policies and practices.

In future research that enables us to continue with the line of investigation presented in this article, the way in which the 2030 Agenda is present in the different academic spaces of territories beyond the need for implementation should be a focus to determine its impact on subjects, grades, master's programs, or academic activities. This approach would enable us to obtain an internal vision of the research centers and their internal work regarding the implementation and conceptual debate of the agenda. This approach not only underscores the relevance of our current findings but also paves the way for subsequent studies, encouraging other researchers to explore and expand upon the themes we have identified.

While our study did not specifically focus on gender or other demographic differences in how the themes played out, we acknowledge the importance of this aspect. In our future research, we will incorporate a more detailed analysis of how different demographic factors, such as gender, age, and geographic origin, influence the discussions and perspectives on the 2030 Agenda. This will provide a more nuanced understanding of the dynamics at play and help to identify any significant differences that could inform more tailored and effective policy recommendations.

The 2030 Agenda has also made it possible to generate academic and intellectual networks in a globalized world during climate crises or other crises, such as pandemics. This agenda facilitates science and intellectual capital to be fundamental actors in generating spaces for knowledge transfer that will enable us to understand and act with greater clarity regarding the problems that affect the planet.

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