

Economic Justice and Sustainable Development: Towards an Integrated Political Justice Framework for Equity, Inclusion, And Transformative Governance

Deepa S¹, Rajdeep Kaur²

¹Research Scholar, Department of Political Science, Desh Bhagat University, Mandi Gobindgarh, Punjab, India

²Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, Desh Bhagat University, Mandi Gobindgarh, Punjab, India

ABSTRACT: Economic growth can increase productive capacity and create resources for development, but it does not automatically remove inequality, social exclusion, unequal opportunities, or differences in people's ability to benefit from progress. This conceptual article examines why growth-centred development can produce economic gains without producing sufficiently fair and sustainable outcomes. It argues that economic justice should be understood as a political foundation of sustainable development rather than as a separate welfare concern. Drawing on John Rawls's account of justice, Amartya Sen's capability approach, Political Justice Framework for Sustainable Development. The framework brings together five Martha Nussbaum's emphasis on human capabilities and dignity, and Robert Nozick's concern with individual liberty, the article develops an Integrated mutually reinforcing dimensions: equitable distribution, capability enhancement, democratic participation, institutional accountability, and transformative governance. The study uses conceptual analysis, comparative normative political analysis, political economy analysis, and interpretive synthesis of selected secondary sources. The argument is that resources matter, but their developmental value depends on whether people can convert them into real opportunities, participate in decisions that affect them, and rely on institutions that are transparent, responsive, and capable of reform. The framework therefore moves beyond a narrow concern with economic growth and proposes a political understanding of development in which fairness, human capability, democratic voice, institutional responsibility, and structural change are connected. The article concludes that sustainable development is more likely to be inclusive and durable when economic resources are fairly distributed, translated into human capabilities, shaped through meaningful participation, protected by accountable institutions, and supported by transformative governance.

KEYWORDS: Economic Justice; Sustainable Development; Distributive Justice; Capability Approach; Democratic Participation; Governance; Social Inclusion; Transformative Governance

I. INTRODUCTION

Economic growth occupies a central place in modern development thinking because it can increase production, employment, public revenue, investment, and the resources available for improving living conditions. Yet the existence of economic growth does not by itself tell us whether development is fair. A society may become wealthier while large sections of its population continue to experience poverty, unequal access to education and healthcare, insecure employment, social exclusion, or limited influence over public decisions. The political significance of this problem lies in the fact that development is never only about the size of an economy. It is also about the distribution of opportunities, the exercise of power, and the institutional conditions under which people live.

The question becomes sharper when development is described as sustainable. Sustainable development requires societies to meet present needs without undermining the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987). The Sustainable Development Goals broaden this agenda by connecting poverty reduction, inequality, social inclusion, institutional effectiveness, environmental responsibility, and human wellbeing (United Nations, 2015). These objectives imply that development should be assessed through more than aggregate economic performance. It should also be assessed by asking whether people can live secure and dignified lives, whether opportunities are distributed fairly, and whether institutions can respond to social and environmental pressures.

Conventional economic indicators remain useful because they provide information about production and economic capacity. However, they do not reveal how benefits are distributed or whether individuals possess the practical freedom to use available resources. Stiglitz, Sen, and Fitoussi (2010) argue for a broader understanding of social progress because aggregate measures can

Economic Justice and Sustainable Development: Towards an Integrated Political Justice Framework for Equity, Inclusion, And Transformative Governance

hide important differences in wellbeing and economic security. A rise in national income can therefore coexist with conditions that leave some groups substantially less able to benefit from development.

These concerns bring economic justice into the centre of sustainable development. Rawls (1971) provides an important starting point by asking how institutions should be organised so that social and economic arrangements are fair, with particular attention to the position of the least advantaged. His approach shifts attention from aggregate gains to the fairness of institutional rules and outcomes. In development policy, this perspective raises a practical question: do economic and social arrangements improve the position and opportunities of those who are most disadvantaged?

Sen (1999) takes the discussion further by distinguishing between resources and the capabilities people have to convert those resources into valuable ways of living. Two individuals may receive similar resources but possess different real opportunities because of differences in health, education, social conditions, discrimination, disability, location, or access to institutions. Development therefore concerns the expansion of substantive freedoms rather than the simple accumulation of goods.

Nussbaum (2011) strengthens the human-centred dimension of this argument by emphasising capabilities connected with dignity and a life worthy of human flourishing. Her approach draws attention to health, education, bodily integrity, affiliation, and political participation. Nozick (1974), by contrast, gives greater weight to individual liberty, entitlement, and limits on redistributive state action. The difference is important because a justice-oriented development framework must consider not only equality and social protection but also the freedom of individuals and the legitimate boundaries of public authority.

These perspectives are not identical, and this paper does not claim that they can be merged into a single philosophical theory. Rather, they offer different normative resources for examining the political foundations of development. Rawls helps clarify distributive fairness; Sen focuses attention on real capabilities and freedom; Nussbaum emphasises human dignity and essential capabilities; and Nozick keeps individual liberty visible within debates about redistribution and state power.

The problem addressed in this article is therefore the conceptual gap between theories of economic justice and the governance of sustainable development. Justice theories provide principles for thinking about fairness, freedom, disadvantage, and human wellbeing, while sustainable development frameworks identify broad social, economic, environmental, and institutional objectives. What is needed is a clearer political framework that connects these concerns rather than treating them as separate areas.

The article addresses three questions: (1) Why can growth-centred development fail to produce inclusive and sustainable outcomes? (2) How can principles of economic justice be connected to sustainable development governance? and (3) What political framework can connect distribution, capabilities, participation, accountability, and institutional transformation? In response, the paper develops an Integrated Political Justice Framework for Sustainable Development based on five interconnected dimensions: equitable distribution, capability enhancement, democratic participation, institutional accountability, and transformative governance.

The central argument is that sustainable development should be understood not simply as economic expansion but as a political process through which societies decide how resources are distributed, how capabilities are developed, whose voices are heard, how public institutions are held responsible, and whether structures that reproduce exclusion can be transformed.

II. METHODOLOGY

This article adopts a conceptual and theoretical research design. Its purpose is not to test a statistical hypothesis but to develop and clarify a political framework connecting economic justice with sustainable development. The study therefore works primarily with established concepts in political theory, capability theory, development thought, and governance.

The analysis is based on selected secondary sources, including foundational works by Rawls, Sen, Nussbaum, and Nozick, together with development-oriented sources from international institutions and major contributions on measuring social progress. The sources are used to identify concepts, compare normative positions, and build an integrated conceptual argument rather than to generate an empirical dataset.

Four analytical approaches guide the study. First, comparative normative political analysis is used to examine different understandings of justice, distribution, liberty, capability, and institutional responsibility. Second, conceptual analysis is used to clarify the relationship among economic resources, human capabilities, participation, accountability, and institutional change. Third, political economy analysis recognises that development outcomes are shaped by the interaction of economic resources, institutional arrangements, social inequalities, and political power. Fourth, interpretive synthesis brings these insights together into a coherent framework.

The five dimensions of the proposed framework were selected because each addresses a different but connected political condition of inclusive development: distribution addresses access to resources; capabilities address what people can actually do with those resources; participation addresses political voice; accountability addresses the responsible use of public power; and transformative governance addresses institutional capacity for structural change. This selection is consistent with recent work linking capability-based assessment to multidimensional well-being and examining the political and institutional conditions of SDG implementation (Seckler & Volkert, 2021; Hickmann et al., 2024; Beisheim et al., 2025).

Economic Justice and Sustainable Development: Towards an Integrated Political Justice Framework for Equity, Inclusion, And Transformative Governance

The resulting framework is normative and conceptual. It is not presented as an empirically validated causal model, and no claim is made that the five dimensions automatically produce sustainable development in every context. Rather, it offers an analytical structure that can be tested and refined through future comparative and empirical research.

III. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

A. Limits of Growth-Centred Development

Economic growth can create the material resources needed for social improvement, but it cannot determine by itself how those resources are distributed or whether they reach people who face structural disadvantage. A country can record rising national income while inequalities in wealth, employment, education, healthcare, and political influence remain substantial. The issue is therefore not whether growth matters; it is whether growth is translated into broad and meaningful improvements in people's lives.

A growth-centred approach can conceal differences between social groups. Aggregate indicators combine diverse experiences into a single figure and may therefore make unequal outcomes less visible. A national increase in income does not show whether low-income households have gained secure employment, whether disadvantaged children have gained comparable educational opportunities, or whether vulnerable communities have adequate access to healthcare and social protection.

The problem is particularly significant when environmental pressures are considered. Development can generate benefits while also producing costs that are unevenly distributed. Communities with fewer resources may have less capacity to respond to environmental shocks, while those with greater economic and political power may be better positioned to protect their interests. Sustainable development consequently requires attention not only to the creation of wealth but also to the distribution of both benefits and risks.

Growth should therefore be treated as a means rather than as the complete measure of development. The relevant political questions are who benefits from economic expansion, who bears its social and environmental costs, and what opportunities are created for people who begin from unequal positions. These questions make economic justice inseparable from sustainable development.

B. Economic Justice as a Foundation of Sustainable Development

Economic justice provides a normative basis for evaluating whether development institutions distribute opportunities and burdens fairly. Rawls (1971) directs attention to the design of institutions and to the position of those who are least advantaged. Applied to development, the insight is that policy success cannot be judged only by total gains. It must also be considered in relation to the people who have the fewest resources and opportunities.

The Rawlsian perspective is particularly useful because it places institutions at the centre of justice. Inequality is not simply an individual condition; it can be produced or reinforced by rules concerning taxation, public services, employment, education, political representation, and access to social goods. A sustainable development agenda that ignores institutional distribution may therefore improve aggregate performance without adequately addressing structural disadvantage.

Sen (1999) changes the focus from resources to capabilities. What matters is not only whether resources are available but whether individuals can actually convert them into valuable ways of living. A policy may formally provide equal access while leaving significant differences in real opportunity. Capability therefore adds a practical dimension to distributive justice: the question becomes whether people have genuine freedom to pursue lives they have reason to value.

Nussbaum (2011) gives this human-centred approach a stronger normative emphasis by linking capabilities with dignity. Her perspective is useful for development because it draws attention to conditions without which participation in social and political life becomes seriously constrained. Nozick (1974) provides a contrasting reminder that redistribution and public intervention raise questions about individual liberty. A framework of economic justice must therefore consider both collective responsibility and legitimate personal freedom.

These theories can be read as complementary analytical lenses rather than as parts of one philosophical system. Together they encourage a broader understanding of economic justice: fair institutions matter, resources matter, real capabilities matter, individual freedom matters, and the political processes through which decisions are made also matter.

C. From Resources to Capabilities

A central implication of the capability approach is that resources do not have identical effects for everyone. Consider education. Expanding the number of schools or increasing educational expenditure may improve formal access, but students facing poverty, poor nutrition, disability, geographical isolation, or inadequate support may still be unable to benefit in the same way. The existence of a public resource is therefore not equivalent to the existence of an effective capability.

The same reasoning applies to healthcare, employment, housing, social protection, and political participation. A formal right may exist while practical barriers prevent people from exercising it. Capability enhancement requires institutions to address these barriers rather than assuming that equal provision automatically produces equal opportunity.

Economic Justice and Sustainable Development: Towards an Integrated Political Justice Framework for Equity, Inclusion, And Transformative Governance

This distinction also changes the role of government. Public policy should not stop at transferring resources; it should consider whether those resources produce real improvements in people's freedom and agency. Capability enhancement therefore forms a bridge between distributive justice and human development, connecting the question of what institutions provide with the question of what people are actually able to achieve.

IV. INTEGRATED POLITICAL JUSTICE FRAMEWORK FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The central contribution of this article is the Integrated Political Justice Framework for Sustainable Development. The framework brings together five dimensions that are often discussed separately: equitable distribution, capability enhancement, democratic participation, institutional accountability, and transformative governance. Its purpose is not to create another list of development goals but to show how these dimensions can function together as a political structure for inclusive development.

The framework begins with equitable distribution because access to resources remains a necessary condition of opportunity. It then moves to capability enhancement because resources have limited developmental value when people cannot effectively use them. Democratic participation follows because development is also a question of political agency: people should have a meaningful role in decisions that shape their lives. Institutional accountability is necessary to ensure that public authority is exercised responsibly. Finally, transformative governance addresses situations in which existing institutions reproduce exclusion and therefore require deeper reform.

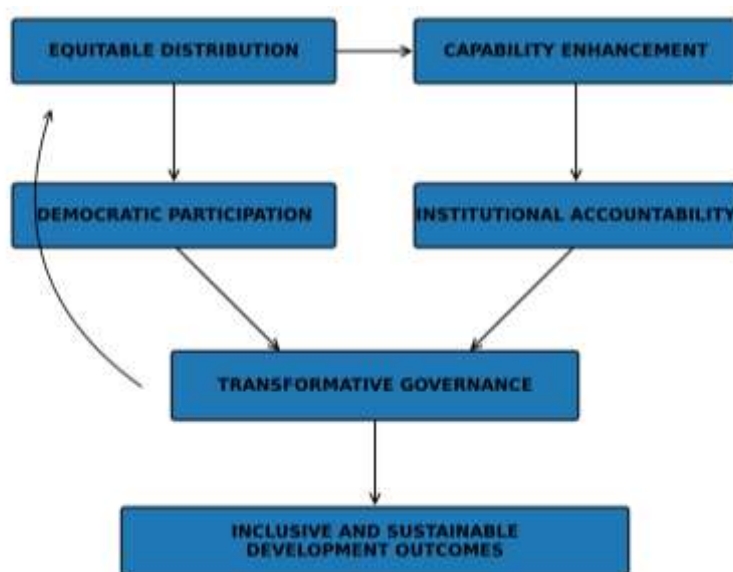


Figure 1. Integrated Political Justice Framework

The framework should not be interpreted as a rigid linear sequence. The arrows show a logical relationship among the dimensions, while the feedback relationship indicates that the dimensions can influence one another. For example, democratic participation can shape distributive priorities, accountability can improve capability-enhancing services, and transformative governance can strengthen all other dimensions. This is consistent with research that treats SDG governance as a complex, multi-level political process rather than a purely administrative exercise (Hickmann et al., 2024).

A. Equitable Distribution

Equitable distribution concerns fair access to economic and social resources, including income, employment, education, healthcare, infrastructure, social protection, and other public goods. Fairness does not require every person to receive exactly the same resources. People begin from different circumstances and may require different forms or levels of support to enjoy meaningful opportunities.

The Rawlsian concern with the least advantaged is relevant because development policies can be assessed according to their effects on groups that have fewer resources and weaker institutional power. Distribution should therefore be understood not simply as the transfer of income but as the allocation of the conditions required for participation in social life.

Equitable distribution is the material foundation of the framework. Without adequate access to resources, the later dimensions of capability, participation, and institutional voice are weakened. At the same time, distribution cannot be treated as sufficient, because people may possess similar resources while having different abilities to use them.

Economic Justice and Sustainable Development: Towards an Integrated Political Justice Framework for Equity, Inclusion, And Transformative Governance

B. Capability Enhancement

Capability enhancement focuses on what people are genuinely able to do and to be. Sen (1999) provides the central theoretical basis for this dimension, while Nussbaum (2011) strengthens its connection with human dignity. The emphasis is on substantive opportunity rather than formal provision.

Capability-enhancing institutions include quality education, accessible healthcare, decent employment, social protection, access to information, freedom from discrimination, and opportunities for political participation. These are not merely welfare benefits. They expand the practical choices available to individuals and strengthen their ability to participate in economic, social, and political life.

The capability dimension therefore changes the evaluation of development policy. Instead of asking only whether a programme distributed resources, policymakers should ask whether it expanded people's real opportunities. This makes capability enhancement the bridge between economic distribution and human development.

C. Democratic Participation

Development is not only about outcomes; it is also about who has a voice in determining priorities. Democratic participation gives citizens and communities opportunities to influence decisions concerning economic, social, and environmental development.

Participation can include public consultation, community engagement, local decision-making, representation of marginalised groups, access to information, and participatory policy processes. Meaningful participation requires more than inviting people to express opinions. It requires institutional arrangements through which public input can affect decisions.

Participation also has a justice dimension. When groups affected by development decisions have little political voice, unequal outcomes can be reinforced even where formal distributive policies exist. Democratic participation therefore connects capability with political agency.

D. Institutional Accountability

Institutional accountability concerns the conditions under which public power is exercised and reviewed. Democratic participation alone cannot guarantee fair outcomes if institutions are opaque, unresponsive, or weakly monitored. Accountability therefore requires transparency, access to information, legal safeguards, monitoring, oversight, and accessible mechanisms for questioning public decisions.

Accountability protects the other dimensions of the framework. It helps ensure that resources reach intended beneficiaries, public services are delivered effectively, participation is meaningful, and vulnerable groups receive institutional protection. It also limits the possibility that economic or political power will capture development institutions.

In this sense, accountability is not simply an administrative requirement. It is a condition of political justice because it determines whether citizens can hold decision-makers responsible for the distribution and use of public resources.

E. Transformative Governance

Transformative governance addresses the structural character of inequality. Some disadvantages are reproduced through existing policies, institutional routines, social structures, and patterns of political power. When this occurs, limited policy adjustments may not be sufficient.

Transformative governance refers to the capacity of institutions to identify structural problems, reform ineffective policies, strengthen representation, respond to new social and environmental challenges, and change practices that reproduce exclusion. It therefore adds a dynamic element to the framework.

The concept also implies institutional learning. Sustainable development occurs in changing social and environmental conditions, so institutions must be capable of reviewing their own performance and adapting. Transformative governance is consequently an ongoing capacity for institutional change rather than a single reform event. Recent sustainability-governance research likewise emphasizes systemic transformation and institutional change rather than relying only on incremental behavioural or policy adjustments (Lah, 2024).

V. INTERACTION AMONG THE FIVE DIMENSIONS

The five dimensions should be understood as mutually reinforcing rather than as isolated policy categories. Equitable distribution creates access to resources and opportunities. Capability enhancement enables people to convert those resources into meaningful freedoms. Democratic participation gives people a role in shaping decisions. Institutional accountability ensures that public power is exercised responsibly. Transformative governance allows institutions to correct structures that continue to produce exclusion.

The basic relationship can be expressed as: Fair distribution → Real capabilities → Meaningful participation → Accountable institutions → Institutional transformation → Inclusive and sustainable development. Each stage identifies a problem that the previous stage alone cannot solve. Distribution without capability may leave people unable to use resources effectively. Capability

Economic Justice and Sustainable Development: Towards an Integrated Political Justice Framework for Equity, Inclusion, And Transformative Governance

without participation may leave people without political influence. Participation without accountability may become symbolic. Accountability without transformative capacity may preserve institutions that are fundamentally exclusionary.

At the same time, the relationship is not strictly one-directional. Participation can influence distributive priorities. Accountability can improve capability-enhancing services. Greater capabilities can strengthen people's ability to participate. Transformative governance can revise the institutions through which all other dimensions are delivered. The framework is therefore best understood as a dynamic political system.

This dynamic quality matters for sustainable development because social and environmental challenges change over time. A justice-oriented governance system must combine stable principles with the capacity to learn and adapt. The central proposition is that sustainable development becomes more inclusive and durable when economic resources are fairly distributed, converted into human capabilities, shaped through democratic participation, protected by accountable institutions, and supported by institutions capable of structural transformation.

VI. THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTION

A. Connecting Distribution and Capability

The first contribution is the explicit connection between distributive justice and capabilities. Discussions of economic justice can focus heavily on how resources are allocated, while capability approaches can appear detached from the institutional mechanisms that provide resources. The framework treats these concerns as complementary. Fair distribution creates necessary conditions, while capability enhancement determines whether those conditions become meaningful opportunities.

B. Connecting Justice with Democratic Participation

The second contribution is the placement of democratic participation within the concept of economic justice. Justice concerns not only the distribution of material outcomes but also the distribution of political voice. Development decisions involve choices about public spending, infrastructure, environmental priorities, social protection, and economic opportunity. These choices affect groups differently, making participation a substantive component of justice rather than an optional administrative exercise.

C. Connecting Normative Theory with Governance

The third contribution is the connection between normative theories of justice and institutional transformation. Theories of justice provide standards for evaluating social arrangements, but sustainable development requires institutions capable of applying, monitoring, and revising those arrangements. Transformative governance provides this institutional dimension and positions sustainable development as a political project rather than simply an economic or technical programme.

D. Reframing Sustainable Development as a Political Process

A broader contribution of the framework is its understanding of sustainable development as a process of political choice. Distribution, capability, participation, accountability, and institutional reform all involve questions of power and public responsibility. The framework therefore shifts the discussion from whether development occurs to how development is organised, experienced, and sustained.

VII. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

A. Broaden Measures of Development

Economic indicators remain important, but they should be complemented by measures of inequality, capabilities, access to public services, political participation, and institutional performance. A broader assessment can reveal differences that aggregate growth measures hide. The United Nations' 2025 assessment of the Sustainable Development Goals also underscores the uneven nature of current progress and the need to look beyond aggregate development indicators (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs [UNDESA], 2025).

B. Treat Human Capability as an Investment

Education, healthcare, social protection, and decent employment should be treated as investments in human capability rather than only as welfare expenditure. Such investments expand people's ability to participate in economic and political life and can strengthen the foundations of long-term development.

C. Address Structural Inequality

Policies should examine how institutions and social structures shape opportunities for different groups. A policy can appear neutral at the aggregate level while producing unequal effects for people who begin from different social and economic positions. Addressing structural inequality therefore requires attention to both outcomes and institutional design.

Economic Justice and Sustainable Development: Towards an Integrated Political Justice Framework for Equity, Inclusion, And Transformative Governance

D. Strengthen Democratic Participation

Citizens and affected communities should have meaningful opportunities to influence development priorities. Participation should move beyond symbolic consultation and include mechanisms through which public input can affect decisions. This can strengthen both legitimacy and responsiveness.

E. Improve Institutional Accountability

Development programmes require transparent implementation, monitoring, public oversight, access to information, and accessible grievance mechanisms. Accountability helps ensure that resources serve public purposes and that decision-makers can be questioned when policies fail or produce unfair outcomes.

F. Develop Transformative Institutions

Institutional capacity should include the ability to identify and reform policies that reproduce inequality. Governments and development institutions should be capable of responding to technological, economic, social, and environmental change. Sustainable development therefore requires institutions that can learn, adapt, and transform when existing arrangements no longer produce equitable outcomes.

VIII. CONCLUSION

Economic growth remains an important component of development because it can expand productive capacity and generate resources for social improvement. Yet growth alone cannot guarantee justice, inclusion, or sustainability. Societies can become wealthier while significant inequalities in opportunity, capability, political voice, and institutional protection remain. The central challenge is therefore not simply how to increase economic output, but how to organise development so that its benefits, burdens, opportunities, and decisions are addressed fairly.

This article has argued that economic justice provides an important political foundation for this task. Rawls draws attention to fair institutions and the position of disadvantaged groups. Sen shifts attention from resources to substantive capabilities and freedoms. Nussbaum connects capabilities with human dignity, while Nozick reminds us that individual liberty and the limits of state intervention remain important in debates about redistribution. The framework uses these perspectives as distinct analytical resources rather than claiming that they form one unified philosophical doctrine.

The proposed Integrated Political Justice Framework brings together five dimensions: equitable distribution, capability enhancement, democratic participation, institutional accountability, and transformative governance. Its central insight is that none of these dimensions is sufficient on its own. Fair distribution is weakened when people lack the capabilities to use resources. Capabilities are politically incomplete when people cannot participate in decisions that affect them. Participation requires accountable institutions, and accountability becomes limited when institutions cannot reform structures that reproduce exclusion.

The framework therefore presents sustainable development as a continuing political process. It connects material resources with human agency, democratic voice with institutional responsibility, and present policy with the capacity for future adaptation. This perspective moves beyond a narrow understanding of development as economic expansion and toward an understanding of development as a process of building fairer institutions and wider human opportunities.

The study is conceptual and does not empirically test the proposed relationships. This is a limitation, but it also creates a clear direction for future research. Subsequent studies can operationalise the five dimensions, develop indicators for their measurement, and examine how combinations of distribution, capabilities, participation, accountability, and transformative governance operate across different political systems and development contexts.

Ultimately, sustainable development should not be judged only by how much an economy grows. It should also be judged by whether people gain meaningful opportunities, whether disadvantaged groups are protected, whether citizens can participate in decisions, whether institutions remain accountable, and whether systems can change when they reproduce exclusion. Economic justice is therefore not an additional objective placed beside sustainable development. It is one of the political foundations through which inclusive and sustainable development can be pursued.

REFERENCES

- 1) Bartolomei, L., Blundo-Canto, G., & De Muro, P. (2024). How is the capability approach applied to assess well-being impacts? A systematic review. *Journal of Human Development and Capabilities*, 25(3), 367–399. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19452829.2024.2369502>
- 2) Beisheim, M., Asseburg, M., Ballbach, E. J., Eickhoff, K., Fischer, S., Godehardt, N., Kurtz, G., Meyer, M., Müller, M., Roll, S., Sahm, A., Wagner, C., & Zilla, C. (2025). Politics matters! Political will as a critical condition for implementing the Sustainable Development Goals. *Earth System Governance*, 24, 100244. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.esg.2025.100244>
- 3) Hickmann, T., Biermann, F., Sénit, C.-A., Sun, Y., Bexell, M., Bolton, M., Bornemann, B., Censoro, J., Charles, A., Coy, D., Dahlmann, F., Elder, M., Fritzsche, F., Gehre Galvão, T., Grainger-Brown, J., Inoue, C., Jönsson, K., Koloffon Rosas,

Economic Justice and Sustainable Development: Towards an Integrated Political Justice Framework for Equity, Inclusion, And Transformative Governance

- M., Krellenberg, K., & Weiland, S. (2024). Scoping article: Research frontiers on the governance of the Sustainable Development Goals. *Global Sustainability*, 7, e7. <https://doi.org/10.1017/sus.2024.4>
- 4) Horbachevska, T., van Zeben, J. A. W., & Bernaz, N. (2024). A capability approach to the sustainable development goals: Towards positive corporate human rights obligations. *Transnational Legal Theory*, 15(3), 465–492. <https://doi.org/10.1080/20414005.2024.2434383>
 - 5) Lah, O. (2024). Safe system for sustainable development. *Sustainable Earth Reviews*, 7, 9. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s42055-024-00072-z>
 - 6) Laruffa, F., & Zimmermann, B. (2025). Towards a framework articulating justice and development for evaluating just transition policies. *The Economic and Labour Relations Review*, 36(4), 930–946. <https://doi.org/10.1017/elr.2026.10057>
 - 7) Nozick, R. (1974). *Anarchy, state, and utopia*. Basic Books.
 - 8) Nussbaum, M. C. (2011). *Creating capabilities: The human development approach*. Harvard University Press.
 - 9) Provenzano, V., & Seminara, M. R. (2024). Democratic participatory networks and governance processes in Sicily. *Land Use Policy*, 144, 107240. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.landusepol.2024.107240>
 - 10) Rawls, J. (1971). *A theory of justice*. Harvard University Press.
 - 11) Seckler, M., & Volkert, J. (2021). The capability approach: A promising foundation for sustainable development? *Ecological Economics*, 183, 106951. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecolecon.2021.106951>
 - 12) Sen, A. (1999). *Development as freedom*. Oxford University Press.
 - 13) Sen, A. (2009). *The idea of justice*. Harvard University Press.
 - 14) Stiglitz, J. E., Sen, A., & Fitoussi, J.-P. (2010). *Mismeasuring our lives: Why GDP doesn't add up*. The New Press.
 - 15) United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. (2025). *The Sustainable Development Goals report 2025*. United Nations. <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2025/>
 - 16) United Nations. (2015). *Transforming our world: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. United Nations.
 - 17) World Commission on Environment and Development. (1987). *Our common future*. Oxford University Press.



There is an Open Access article, distributed under the term of the Creative Commons Attribution – Non-Commercial 4.0 International (CC BY-NC 4.0) (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>), which permits remixing, adapting and building upon the work for non-commercial use, provided the original work is properly cited.