

## BEYOND RHETORIC: A CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF SOCIAL JUSTICE THEORY IN DEVELOPMENT

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### *Abstract*

*This study explores the historical development of Social Justice Theory and its relevance in the context of development planning. The research adopts a descriptive narrative method to trace the evolution of the theory from ancient Greek philosophers to contemporary thinkers. Social justice is defined as a framework for political goals that promote equality of outcome and treatment, recognizing the worth and dignity of all individuals and fostering participation, particularly among the most disadvantaged.*

*The study finds that Social Justice Theory has undergone significant transformations over time, from the distributive approach of Rawls and Craig to the more recent focus on community rights and development impacts, as advocated by Fraser. However, the scope of social justice theory has become increasingly broad, encompassing issues such as land distribution, housing, and economic development policies. This has led to debates about the viability of social justice as the primary parameter for development, as other factors such as economic growth and efficiency may also be prioritized.*

*Overall, the study highlights the ongoing relevance of Social Justice Theory in development planning, particularly in ensuring that policies and practices promote equality and justice for all. However,*

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*it also underscores the need for critical examination of the theory's practical implications, particularly in light of its broad scope and potential conflicts with other development priorities.*

*Keywords :Development Progress; Social Justice Theory; Social Justice Approach; Equality; Participation; Community Rights*

## **Introduction**

Since the late 1940s, social justice has been a minor focus. Development studies. The main objective of both practical and theoretical developments has been achieving economic growth or reducing poverty levels. In the Sixties, Addition theorists argued that to achieve justice in the Third World, countries needed to be exploitative regarding economic relations with Western countries. This is justice's first time at the forefront of study development. However, the Dependency theory failed to survive the great changes the world faced during the debt crisis of the early 1980s.

Dependency theory was short-lived, and equity disappeared from development studies to make room for pro-poor growth. Justice has disappeared from development studies and international organizations' discourse on development. Although these organizations have worked on poverty alleviation for decades, they have not included social justice as a concept or goal in any development strategy. Development is only measured by economic growth, although the numbers are very misleading as they do not provide true validation about people's lives.

Two inherent issues shape Development Studies; The first relates to what academics call "development theory, " a normative discourse ascribed to social justice theory. Another issue involves the study of "development cooperation," which is also referred to as the global architecture from which the policy agenda is properly implemented. Second, this dimension of Development Studies rests on two main challenges; the former aims to build a coherent theory of development as plural and impartial to facilitate the design of a list of universal development goals consistent with a diversity of societies. Second, because the notion of development is mostly related to poverty alleviation and increasing welfare, a set of technical strategies is also needed to implement the development agenda, in this case, the theory of social justice.

The historical struggle between development discourse and policy has hindered access to a coherent theory of development (Schuurman's critical development theory, Sumner & Tribal and Interdisciplinary Development studies, possibly development studies). This barrier limits reaching a set of development assumptions around the world

that can reconstruct the results of scientific research. This academic dispute revolves around three intellectual reactions.

The academic view of development is highly consolidated by contemporary discourses, not the results of critical social investigations like social justice theory. So, for example, when authors such as Kilby and Escobar note that Development Studies are concerned with the effects of neo-colonialism and the forces criticized by hegemonic discourse, what they are doing is no longer embodying a simplistic view of development conceptually as the classical view. Indeed, there is no evidence in the post-development discourse that the true causes of poverty and wealth can be equitably transferred to a social justice theory-led development agenda; "Post-development power is hermeneutic of suspicion, an anti-authoritarian sensibility, and hence a suspicion of 'managerialism'.

Scholars' efforts have traditionally focused on a puristically based analysis, as in contemporary development theory and experimental development studies such as "randomized controlled trials." In such research, "what work" is vaguely assumed in terms of empirical understanding (economics) or, more precisely, universal beliefs (poverty). Instead, assume a "dialectical approach" that will redefine the boundaries embedded in each methodological spectrum.

Institutionalization of development studies. A major concern of international development architecture has been placing attention given to cross-national political spaces that undermine the ability to implement development strategies between agencies, local and regional governments, and social movements: "consisting of deliberate efforts aimed at improvement on the part of various institutions, including government, all kinds of organizations and social movements. For example, bestsellers such as "Why Nations Fail" overemphasize the role of government and political institutions as causes of long-term development: "in particular, they influence investments in physical and human capital and technology, as well as the organization of production. Although cultural and geographical factors may also be important for economic performance. The goal of policymakers may not assume a multidisciplinary development understanding of what works and what might not, focusing on a trial-and-error position with important deficiencies on the development agenda.

A challenge presents itself when it comes to the ability of academics to build a theory of social justice in the development field in which ideologically based discourses and technical instruments will be conveyed through a shared understanding of what development means and how it can be tracked. The main focus of this work is on extending Development Studies as part of socially just welfare. The

object is constrained because of an ontological gap. Such an impossibility pertains to the heart of development, assuming a highly operative view of development. The conflict between social justice theory and development practice can be understood as a progressive dialectical force. Through adequate identification of the status of knowledge, development ideas will develop clearly. Currently, social justice has shifted towards a stronger emphasis on the direction of economic development, community rights and development impacts. Many of these groups have been discriminated against based on factors such as gender, age, wealth, ethnicity, heritage, social status, religion, etc.

As mentioned earlier, such arguments criticize the foundations of development using a limited combination of rational paradigms. Given this epistemic tension, the author will introduce what the author calls the catastrophe of development in which the author distinguishes two gaps inherent in development - normative theory and practice and the extent to which both develop dialectically.

Economic development and social justice have a close relationship, especially when viewed based on the source; both come from scarcity or limitation. As it is known, economics studies how society manages and uses scarce and limited resources. While the problem of justice arises when there is an imbalance in a development.

Justice has such broad dimensions, some of which are social justice, economic justice, political justice and legal justice. Experts have diverse views on these aspects of justice. Some equate the position of all forms of justice so that the term socio-economic appears as a combination of social and economic justice. But some argue that social justice is an accumulation of all the achievements of existing justice. According to Pieterse's statement, only with theoretical improvement can development studies be carried out to bridge the gap between theory-oriented and technique-oriented research. In other words, the aims of the problem must be oriented toward opening up new spaces of inquiry in which the diversity of the World is taken into account and embedded in social justice theory, thereby opening the politics of development to deeper engagement.

## **Research Method**

This study uses a narrative descriptive method to explain the development of Social Justice Theory in development by exploring various valid sources from several previous studies and literature books as a literature review. The method in this article uses library research, which is a method of collecting data by understanding and studying theories from various literature related to this research.

There are four stages of literature study in research, namely preparing the necessary equipment, preparing a working bibliography, organizing time and reading or recording research materials. The data collection uses ways to find sources and construct from various sources, for example, books, journals and research that has been done. The library materials obtained from various references are analyzed critically and must be in-depth to support the propositions and ideas.

### **Critical Review of Social Justice Theory**

Social justice is a contested term that remains to be discovered in social work practice. As Jennissen and Lundy argue, "the term social justice is all-encompassing and devoid of a strong theoretical basis that it is almost meaningless. Craig describes social justice as "a framework of political goals, achieved through social, economic, environmental, and political policies, based on acceptance of difference and diversity, and informed by values related to the attainment of justice, and equality of outcome and treatment; recognizes equal dignity and worth and encourages the dignity of all; fulfillment of basic needs; maximize the reduction of inequality in wealth, income and life opportunities; and participation of all, including the most disadvantaged."

Here, key aspects of social justice are noted: its multidimensional, sociopolitical, and complex nature; embedded notions of justice and equity; the structural basis of social inequality; and an emphasis on people's rights to access material resources (e.g., wealth and income) and non-material "goods" (e.g., life opportunities, opportunities to participate). As a concept, social justice has a long history, developing from Plato's and Socrates' descriptions of justice and rights and persisting throughout Western literature and across many religious frameworks.

The outline of the debate on spatial justice revolves around the meaning of space and its relation to society. Social researchers have long been concerned with the spatial dimensions of social processes, for example, Park, Burgess, and McKenzie, but as separate dimensions, sometimes even dichotomizing society and space, social justice and spatial justice. Moreover, there is no general agreement on whether spatial justice is a meaningful or well-defined term.

For some scholars, spatiality is important in social relations, but not on an equal footing; its goal is social justice, and spatiality is cast as a geographic dimension of social processes. Harvey's opinion draws attention to the relationship between society and space in capitalism, how investment patterns in the built environment cause social

injustice, and how spatiality plays a role in social injustice. Harvey highlights the dark side of 'Absorption of Surplus through urban transformation,' arguing that injustice is so embedded in capitalism and its neoliberal manifestations that justice cannot be achieved in this system and can only be made possible through its structural transformation.

Marcuse argues for 'Putting space in its place', because spatial injustice is a derivative of social injustice and cannot be overcome by spatial or even social solutions. Identify the two main forms of spatial injustice: 'the forced confinement of any group to a confined space,' as in segregation and ghettoization, and the unfair and unequal allocation of resources over space. This is the spatial aspect of social injustice, and spatial remedies are necessary but not sufficient.

In other words, spatial justice is a 'geographical struggle.' Therefore, it is said that there is a dialectical relationship between spatiality and (un)justice because spatialization plays a direct role in the production and reproduction of domination and repression; then, spatial politics can become an arena of struggle for justice. Feinstein's fair city also adopted spatial action as a pathway to social justice. However, Soja kept his distance from the idea of a just city because it was too general. Nevertheless, Feinstein shares Soja's optimism in the effectiveness of spatial solutions to achieve a just city, a term he uses interchangeably with, but prefers spatial justice.

Spatial justice highlights aspects of (in) justice hidden from non-spatial understandings of social justice. For our purposes in this paper, the inherent spatiality of the processes that (re)generate social inequality within and across regions needs to be recognized as intrinsic to public policy resource allocation, market investment decisions, and the life trajectories of individuals and groups. Profit patterns become concentrated in a few areas, leading to further inequality and marginality. Therefore, spatial justice emphasizes the relational spatiality of injustice in society.

In the 20th century, "distributive justice" was accepted as a paradigm that could be used to realize social justice best. "Distributive justice" refers to the proposition that social injustice is best addressed through social policies that ensure a fair distribution of social goods to equalize all citizens' life opportunities and enable "redress" for those experiencing "undeserved inequalities."

This structural perspective, significantly influenced by political reformer Karl Marx and political philosopher John Rawls, reflects the fundamental belief that the causes of social injustice lie in social structure, the organization of social institutions, and the "mode of human relations" and that this determines the "distribution of benefits

and burdens." throughout society." A significant literature exists regarding the relationship between distributive justice, social policy, and social justice.

The structural perspective fundamentally influences social work's understanding of social justice and is reflected in contemporary theories related to critical, radical, structural, feminist, anti-racist, and anti-oppression social work. (Payne, 2020, p. 8). Such a theory involves an analysis of structural location, power, identity, privilege, and language; recognizing social differences and diversity; and including clients as legitimate experts in their own life experiences. Critical race, postcolonialism, and "whiteness" theories are receiving increasing attention, clearly relevant given the long-standing injustices of society.

Various constructs related to social justice are embedded in social work theory. This includes references to power, empowerment and powerlessness, oppression, marginalization, disadvantage, and discrimination; equality, fairness and distribution of resources. Eligibility for services, access and opportunity to participate; and sociopolitical, economic, and policy analysis. The theory of practice supported by social justice includes advocacy, lobbying, and policy work; social change and social action-based practices; employment and community development; organizational analysis; and practices that enable equity, access, and participation .

According to David Johnston, "In most of the ancient writings that deal with the question of justice, the notion that the main contours of the field of the social world might be reshaped to suit human design never occurs." In the Iliad, he says, the status hierarchy is taken for granted, and in the Hebrew scriptures, detailed legal codes come directly from God. What neither the ancient and preclassical Greeks nor the ancient Hebrews envisioned was "that the field of the social world could be reassessed to conform to truly human designs." .

The idea gradually began to appear among the Greeks and Romans, along with philosophical thought. Still, the older idea that "the basic contours of the social world are determined by nature," was a strong contender, with the Romans collapsing. Empire remained the dominant idea for centuries. However, as people began to have more confidence in their ability to make sense of the world, they began to think again that the social world could be understood and even changed. Thus, in the 18th century, reflection on justice addressed this question: "How can humans redesign and rebuild the field of the social world so as to make the field itself just?"

Those who ask this question reject the idea that social arrangements are natural and inevitable. And those asking the questions are pursuing social justice. In Johnston's words, the notion of social justice

is that we can develop "a set of principles from which we can construct an ideally just distribution of rights and privileges, burdens and pains, by which to judge the institutions of society as a whole. and debate the transformation of these institutions if deficiencies are found" .

Simply put, Jason Manning and I have suggested that we think of social justice as the idea "that laws, policies, and social institutions are not just individual behavior but are part of the moral field".

If we are concerned with social justice, we value institutional arrangements in terms of whether they contribute to human development, justice, equity, or whatever else we deem morally desirable. Conceived in this way, social justice is not a specific idea about how institutions should be organized; only the idea that the way institutions are organized is a moral concern. Conceived in this way, it makes no sense to deny social justice. Few people consider the social world to be completely natural and fixed.

Lots of political disagreements, but they usually involve different visions of the best way to organize society than disagreements about whether social arrangements can be changed at all. Social justice seems useful as a moral term, and it seems inevitable that anyone who thinks about the world sociologically and anyone looking for descriptions and explanations of social order does too. When thinking about the world morally, will reflect the will of that order.

Thomas Kuhn said that a scientific revolution is a rare event in the history of science in which the dominant paradigm of a scientific discipline—that is, "a whole constellation of beliefs, values, techniques, and so on is shared by a particular [scientific] member. community" is replaced by a new paradigm.

However, more relevant to understanding the contemporary sociological situation is Kuhn's discussion of what he calls pre-paradigmatic science. If we modify Kuhn's definition of paradigm slightly to include a general framework within which theories are formulated (rather than one shared by an entire community), this period before the emergence of a dominant paradigm can more accurately be called the multi-paradigmatic period. This means that there are usually several different and competing explanatory paradigms and strategies. That is the state of sociology today. In sociology there is no dominant paradigm; There are a number of competing explanatory strategies. One is conflict theory, and critical theory, a form of conflict theory, informs so much of social justice activism today.

Conflict theory "explains human behavior as a struggle for dominance." In addition, conflict theory usually assumes four things: (1) that social life involves conflicting interests, (2) that conflicts of

interest involve a zero-sum outcome where one party's gain is the other party's loss, (3) the dominant group gains at the expense of others, and (4) that radical change is the only way to reduce the power of the dominant group.

Karl Marx was the first to use this approach. For Marx, conflicts of interest occur between social classes, and class struggle drives changes in the history of development. Every society has a system of class relations, and social institutions benefit the dominant class and allow the exploitation of others. Clashes between classes usually result in a new class system with a new dominant class, but Marx believed in the overthrow of the current capitalist system, in which the bourgeoisie (the capitalists), which owns the means of production, exploits the proletariat (workers), who must work for wages, will end class once and for all, and lead to a new kind of society. Marxists advocate revolution.

For a Marxist studying capitalist society, the task is not to determine whether or how much capitalists exploit workers. The approach treats exploitation as a constant to be assumed rather than as a variable to be explained. The task is to show how social arrangements lead to exploitation even if those social arrangements may at first appear liberating. Thus, Marxists argue that the idea of equality before the law actually exacerbates inequality. Agreements between capitalists and workers appear legitimate because they are treated as agreements between equals, even though the power dynamic leaves workers in no position to bargain. The idea of equality disguises inequality and exploitation.

Marx offered a new way of understanding society and historical change, but his predictions failed. Clashes between capitalists and workers do not lead to the failure of capitalism and revolution. And in a society where communist parties gain power and abolish classes, that doesn't lead to a new kind of society. The government did not wither, as Marx had predicted. Instead, the communist reformers established totalitarian governments, among the most disruptive and cruel governments in history. Class abolition also does not end conflict and exploitation in the development of a country. Political elites controlled the masses in the new society and often attacked each other in their pursuit of power. The economic system that was built also failed, causing hunger and shortages of basic goods, and finally, the government led by the communist party collapsed or reformed.

Orthodox Marxists may not be affected by any of this. The idea might be that capitalism will still collapse; the revolution is still coming. The revolutions in Russia, China and elsewhere were not truly communist, and their governments were not truly Marxist. Marxism has not failed; True Marxism has not been tried. But another tactic for those

sympathetic to Marxist analysis is to accept many of Marx's frameworks while rejecting many specifics. This could mean accepting Marx's class analysis while rejecting his hopes for change. Still, more generally, it means accepting the conflict framework while rejecting Marx's emphasis on class alone as a source of oppression and a driver of historical change. According to Fraser (2013), social justice must be based on participation parity, namely "social arrangements that allow all (adult) members of society to interact with each other as peers." This requires, firstly, "objective conditions that preclude the forms and levels of economic dependence, and inequalities that preclude participation parity and secondly, intersubjective conditions preclude institutionalized norms that systematically depreciate certain categories of people and the qualities associated with them". Second for recognition. In his later work, acknowledging an increasingly interconnected and globalized world and recognizing that "it is no longer axiomatic that the modern nation-state is appropriate to think about justice," Fraser added the political dimension of representation in development.

It is important to note that social justice presupposes all of these conditions, i.e., redistribution, recognition and representation and neither dimension can be reduced to another. Fraser's intention is precisely to develop a conception of justice that embraces all of these dimensions and does not position them one on the other, effectively addressing what he calls the redistribution of recognition dilemma.

Fraser points out that most criticism evokes an understanding of justice as redistribution. Redistribution refers to the economic dimension of justice regarding class inequality and the allocation of wealth and opportunity. More specifically, attention has been drawn to "social arrangements that institutionalize deprivation, exploitation, and stark disparities in wealth, income, and leisure, thereby denying some people the means and opportunity to interact with others as peers."

Hollands, for example, criticizes the Development program as "technologically led, corporately influenced, and tied to the city government's competitive city entrepreneurial competitive model for city marketing/branding purposes" Many critics see development as a tool for global technology companies, such as IBM, Cisco, and Google, to maximize their profits. In-companies' goal is to create and expand markets and make cities dependent on their equipment and knowledge to manage them, effectively establishing themselves as monopolists.

## **Critical Review of Development Planning**

Development is seen as an example of the wider economic shift towards cultural-cognitive capitalism, which can be understood as the search for new 'spatial improvements' at a time when strategies of accumulation are becoming increasingly difficult. Critics remind us further that such an accumulation strategy is made possible by privatizing the national telecommunication system.

Overall, "the real geography of a world that develops unequally from rich and poor cities, regions and countries will not be erased by the digital revolution." Overlapping existing injustices with smart city technology does not dissolve but deepens and strengthens them. As a result, new social and economic divisions in smart cities are to be expected. All of this contradicts participation parity as a prerequisite for social justice.

For Fraser, recognition, the second dimension of social justice, is not equivalent to identity politics but refers to social struggles to overcome subordination structures. Misrecognition occurs when the cultural values placed on certain groups make them inferior and unable to participate as peers in social life in the aspect of development. While redistribution examines the parity barriers to participation associated with wealth and class inequalities in development, recognition directs attention to the regularized patterns, structures, and policies that generate and sustain social status inequalities.

Overall, attention to status inequality along the lines of race, gender, and other axes of social differentiation is absent in the existing critical literature on smart cities. Given the critical recognition of Fraser's formulation of equity, these varied and interconnected status inequalities deserve more attention and analysis, especially given the widespread claims by smart city promoters that the benefits of technological innovation will accrue to all.

Critical scholars who interrogate emerging forms of governance in the context of smart cities point out that restructuring triggered by adopting smart city imperatives and technologies often exacerbates existing inequalities and requires 'smart citizens.' This leaves "little room for the technologically illiterate, the poor and, in general, those who are marginalized from the smart city discourse."

However, not only will discursively and nontechnically devalued citizens find themselves at a disadvantage, but potentially everyone as 'smart' systems is likely to be "more opaque" and difficult to navigate than existing urban systems. Development scholars point out that if capacity building is to be a normative goal of development, development planning can be considered in two distinct ways. The first

of these two ways is to determine the factors or resources needed to increase the capacity of a particular community through moral arguments. After development planners have identified these factors, the development program needs to ensure these capacity-building factors are a top-down approach.

The second way is to devolve the decision-making process on the necessary factors to a democratic deliberation process in the target jurisdictions of the bottom-up approach. Social justice scientists' notions of justice have a central role to play in public participation and democratic deliberation. Sen notes that the notion of social justice cannot be static; it needs to modify itself with the changing nature of different societies.

His assertion, once established, institutions alone cannot guarantee human development and social justice. The institution's role needs to be continuously evaluated; old institutions were removed, and newer ones were added to promote justice and development through a democratic dialogue involving stakeholders. Through this dialogue process, democratic societies determine the direction of their own development as responsible agents. Nussbaum also believes that dialogue and democratic participation are important for justice and development projects.

These two approaches also highlighted the work and development practitioners who participated in the workshop. What emerges from development practice is that although agencies prefer to outline necessary development factors for a particular community through their boards' decisions, some also develop mechanisms to incorporate the opinions of target communities. Referring back to Fraser's opinion, the author suggests that the alternatives proposed so far are amenable solutions to the current smart city problem. By affirmative, he means "remedies aimed at correcting the unjust results of social arrangements without disturbing the basic framework that produced them."

Affirmative solutions still have valuable results, and many argue that the Development system can be used for progressive purposes. Digital development, for example, is filling in the "blank spots on our city map" where governments lack important information about urban life. However, mapping the blank dots does not address the basic structure that Build allows. Vanolo, who also studies the digitization of development, said further that "this may sound efficient, but it is dangerous from a social point of view.

Therefore, and going beyond the affirmative, Fraser proposes a transformative approach "aiming to correct unfair outcomes appropriately by restructuring the underlying generative framework."

In the author's case, that means shifting the discussion away from smart cities, even alternatives, and toward fair cities and just urbanism in the digital age. The just city includes the distributive dimension oriented towards overcoming class inequality, the recognition dimension, which is oriented towards dismantling status hierarchies, and the representative dimension oriented towards transformative opportunities, which makes it possible to reframe "the stage in which the struggle over distribution and recognition is played out."

Of course, we need to determine exactly what it looks like. But we can use Fraser's definition of justice as participation parity across economic, cultural, and political fronts to begin asking questions and conditions to guide efforts in that direction. Some of these questions will be very development specific. While transformative solutions to development injustice aim to correct underlying structural problems, the main questions will remain broader because they are directed at fundamental equity questions. This includes questions such as: How are resources, including wealth, income, labor, leisure and land distributed, and whose development benefits from current development and who loses (redistribution)? Are certain groups of people systematically depreciated and thus limited in their ability to make claims and receive recognition for those claims (confessions)? Who sets the frame for political struggles and claims for justice, and who is excluded from the (representation) framework.

## **Conclusion**

The findings from this research indicate that Social Justice Theory has existed since ancient Greek scientists with definitions of social justice such as Socrates, Plato and Aristotle. In the 20th century, the concept of social justice led to a distributive approach initiated by Rawls and John Rawls, continuing with the arguments of Fredrick, Scurton and Soja with an emphasis on social justice arguments so that they had an impact on many areas of life, one of which was developed. Recent developments in Fraser's thoughts have greatly influenced the development of social justice with the term development politics, which provides the main meeting point for the government's role in creating socially just development. However, in practice, the scope of this social theory becomes very broad, for example, in the division of space, land, housing or economic development policies. This greatly reduces the social justice approach because it is considered no longer capable of being the main parameter in the development.

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