# Sustainable development, capabilities, hegemonic forces and social risks: extending the capability approach to promote resilience against social inequalities

# Sustainable Development, Capabilities, Hegemonic Forces and Social Risks: Extending the Capability Approach to Promote Resilience against Social Inequalities

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## Abstract

The capability approach (CA), while originally regarded as a 'thin' framework relating to an individual's 'States', has been progressively deployed in wider spaces of social welfare and policy development. In general, the CA centralises an individual's (or group's) functionings, and the freedom to achieve those functionings. One under-researched area is the expression of capabilities when constraints are imposed hegemonically, that is, when an individual (or group) appears to consent to having their choices limited because of some underlying sociocultural ideology. Hegemonic forces are particularly relevant to the application of the CA against the UN's sustainable development goals (SDGs); specifically, reduced inequalities (Goal 10) under its 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, since it is generally under large-scale policy regime shifts that sociocultural inequalities are broken and renewed. New, less transparent hegemonies often emerge within policy changes that seek to address inequalities, and they typically embody a mitigating reaction to social risks emanating from policy change. The chapter is fundamentally a theoretical and conceptual paper, approached from an interdisciplinary context, and draws on concepts such as sustainable development, capability approach, and freedom in analysing hegemonic forces with respect to reducing inequalities.

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## Section 1: Theoretical understanding of the concepts of sustainable development, capability approach and freedom

### 1.1: Introduction

This chapter offers an interdisciplinary theoretical and conceptual understanding of sustainable development, capability approach and freedom; it went on to analyse an extension of the capability approach (CA) framework that focusses on hegemonic forces and the implications for freedom of choice, whenever the CA is applied to social justice (particularly economic inequalities). The chapter comprises four sections. Section one introduces the chapter and presents theoretical understanding of the concepts of sustainable development, capability approach and freedom. Section two underscores the link between freedom, capability approach, and sustainable development. Section three explains how hegemonic forces can be viewed as mitigating certain characteristics of social risk and suggests 'hegemonic resilience' as an additional capability for consideration when adopting large-scale policies to address inequalities. The final section four concludes. The chapter is fundamentally an interdisciplinary theoretical paper that draws on concepts such as sustainable development, capability approach, and freedom in analysing hegemonic forces in relation to reducing inequalities (Goal '10').

### 1.2: Sustainable Development

The concept of sustainable development can be approached from national and international context and relevant in almost all disciplines, but from a general perspective, it is perceived as 'the development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the

ability of future generations to meet their own needs'.[3] Two key issues underlie the concept of sustainable development: First, the importance of prioritising the needs of people, especially the fundamental needs of the underprivileged. The second, is an analysis of the limitations imposed by the state of technology and social organisation on the capacity of the environment to meet both the needs of the present and those of the future[4]. There are three pillars of sustainable development: economic sustainability, environmental sustainability, and social sustainability.[5]

Under international law, sustainable development has not yet attained the character of customary norm in international law.[6] It is mostly considered a connecting norm, which serves to reconcile other conflicting norms bordering on the environment, the economy and social development (including human rights)[7]. Sustainable development is understood as the object and purpose of many international economic, social, and environmental treaties involving developed and developing countries.[8] The idea of sustainable development is relevant to international law in areas related to environment, economics, human rights, and trade law.[9]

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[3] For example, See WCED (1987), Our Common Future, Brundtland Report: Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development, p.1.

[4] Andrew Blowers, Jan Boersema, & Adrian Martin (2012), 'Is Sustainable Development Sustainable'? Journal of Integrative Environmental Sciences, Vol. 91 Issue 1, 1-8; and Kemi, Emina (2021), Sustainable Development & the Future Generation, Social Sciences, Humanities & Education Journal, Vol. 2 (1), 57-71.

[5] EC – aims to reduce extreme poverty and guarantee fair paid employment; ES – aims to protect the natural balance of the planet, while limiting the impact human activities on the environment; and SS – aims to guarantee access to basic resources and services to all, See Paul Collins, Sustainable Development: Definition, Objectives and Examples at https://climate.selectra.com/en/environment/sustainable-development (17/03/2023)

[6] Victor Lowe, (1999), Sustainable Development and Unsustainable Arguments in International Law and Sustainable Development: Past Achievements and Future Challenges, Oxford: Oxford University Press at pg. 36.

[7] While sustainable development on its own may not be a customary principle of international law, one of the principles related to sustainable development includes the principle of integration as described in the New Delhi Declaration on principles of international law related to sustainable development (New Delhi; ILA, 2002). See also Ikejiaku, Brian., (2020), The Role of Law in the Economic Development Process: Quest for New Directions and Approaches in International Development Law Regime: Denver Journal of International Law & Policy, Vol. 47, Issue , 51-[vi].

[8] The 1992 Johannesburg plan of implementation highlighted over 300 international social, economic and environmental legal instruments and identifies many more soft law declarations, guidelines, and general assembly resolutions.

[9] Since 1994, sustainable development has been a specific objective of the WTO. The 1994 Marrukesh agreement establishing the world trade organization states in its preamble: That relations carried out in the areas of trade and economics, should be conducted in a way that allows for the optimal use of the world's resources in accordance with the objective of sustainable development.

Sustainable development has not just strong relation, but also a foundation to sustainable development goals (SDGs). Therefore, as a new roadmap to achieve sustainable development, in 2015, the United Nation approved the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development that sets out the SDGs – a series of common goals to protect the planet and guarantee social well-being.[10] The SDGs are considered blueprint to achieving a better and more sustainable future for all; they address the global challenges humans face, including those related to poverty, inequality, environmental degradation, climate change, peace, and justice[11].

### 1.3: Capability Approach

The capability approach (CA) is a broad normative framework for the evaluation and assessment of individual well-being and social arrangements, the design of policies, and proposal about social change in society. Its main characteristics are its highly interdisciplinary character, and the focus on the plural or multidimensional aspect of well-being.[12] The approach highlights the difference between means and ends, and between substantive freedoms (capabilities) and outcomes (achieved functionings).[13]

Some elements of CA can be traced back to a number of writings and scholars;[14] however, it is an economist Sen[15] who pioneered the approach and Nussbaum[16] and a growing number of

[10] Chantal, Carpentier and Hannah, Braun (2020), Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development: A powerful global framework, Journal of the International Council for Small Business, Vol. 1, Issue 1, 14-23.
[11] UN, Take Action for the Sustainable Development Goals, https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/ (16/02/2023).
[12] See Ingrid, Robeyns (2005), The Capability Approach: a theoretical survey: Journal of Human Development, Vol. 6, Issue 1, 93-117.
[13] Ibid
[14] These among others include Aristotle, Adam Smith, & Karl Marx – See Nassabaum, M., (2020), The Capabilities Approach and the History of Philosophy In Chiappero – Martinetti, Osmani & Qizilbash (eds.) The Cambridge

other scholars across the humanities and the social sciences who have significantly developed it. According to Sen, capabilities are the real freedom that people have to achieve their potential doings and beings that is not merely the formal freedom to do or be something, but the substantial opportunity to achieve it.[17] Nussbaum argues that a human life, in order to reach its highest potential, must include a number of 'capabilities' that is, of actual possibilities that one can realise in one's life.[18] Thus, like Sen, she believes that capabilities secure for people a life that one has reason to value, but unlike Sen who advocates for equality of capabilities, Nassabaum argues that what is necessary is a threshold of capabilities.[19]

CA is a theoretical framework that is generally conceived as a flexible and multi-purpose framework, rather than a precise theory of well-being.[20] However and confusingly, within the literature the term, the CA has been used to refer not to this overall framework, but rather to a more specific capability theory.[21] Despite some academic disagreements about the best description of the CA, it is generally understood as a conceptual framework for a range of normative exercises, including most prominently the following: (a) the assessment of individual well-being; (b) the evaluation and assessment of social arrangement; and (c) the design of policies and proposals about social change in society.[22] In all these, capability

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Handbook of the Capability Approach, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 13-39; Sen, A. (1999) Development as Freedom, New York, Knopf. and Walsh, V., (2000), Smith after Sen", Review of Political Economy 12(1), 5-25.

[15] Sen, A., (1993), "Capability and Well-being", in Nussbaum and Sen (eds.), *The Quality of Life*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 30–53.

[16] Nussbaum, M. (1992), Human functioning and social justice. In defense of Aristotelian essentialism. *Political Theory*, 20(2): 202–246.

[17] Sen, A., (1999), note 14.

[18] Nussbaum, M., (2011), Creating Capabilities, Cambridge, M.A. Harvard University Press.

[19] Christopher Ryan Maboloc (2008), The Concept of Human Development: A Comparative Study of Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum: Centre for Ethics, Linkopings Universitet.

[20] See for e.g., Sen, A. (2009), The Idea of Justice, London: Allen Lane; and Qizilbash.

[21] For example, Nussbaum's partial capability theory of Justice (2000); or Sen's theory of transitional justice (2008); or Sen's theory of development as freedom (1999)

[22] Robeyns, Ingrid and Morten Fibieger Byskov, 'The Capability Approach' , Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (revised) https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/capability-approach/#:~:text=The%20capability%20approach%20is%20a,of%20people's%20capabilities%20and%20functionings (07/06/2023).

theory approach is a theoretical framework that involves two core normative claims. First, the assumption that freedom to achieve well-being is of primary moral importance. And second, that freedom to achieve well-being must be understood in terms of people with capabilities.[23] From the legal perspective, this approach in understanding the law is entirely consistent with the CA's emphasis on an active role for government in providing the conditions that make real choices – about what to do and who to be – possible.[24]

## 1.4: Freedom

One of the essential issues which are raised in all concepts of modern science as problem solution is freedom which has been mentioned in different fields of sciences.[25] But regarding sensitivity of the human concepts and continuous feedbacks of the human behaviours from each other, concept of freedom has higher position in social sciences so that one of the largest changes of social history after the 19th century was governance method based on freedom which had many proponents from freedom of markets to humanism and preference over freedom of the persons.[26] The right to freedom is important because it allows individuals to have power over own lives and to strive for a better life; as a society, there is the freedom to enact laws that protect personal rights and freedoms; and as a nation, people enjoy the freedom of an independent government that allow to make foreign policy decisions.[27] Freedom is one of the basic rights that all human beings deserve, regardless of where they live or what the circumstances are. In a recent report 'In larger freedom: towards development, security and human rights for all' It is argued that while freedom from want

[23] Sen, A., note 14, 17.
[24] Gelber, K., (2020), In Enrica, Chiappero-Martinetti, et al (eds.) 'The Cambridge Handbook of the Capability Approach', Cambridge University Press.
[25] Shahram Jafarzadeh and Mohhamad Beheshti, (2012), Importance of freedom in Humanities Developing: Procedia – Social and Behavioural Sciences, Vol. 31: 323 – 332.
[26] Ibid
[27] Paul, Jenkins., (2022), Why Freedom is Important, at https://brillianto.com/why-freedom-is-important/ (17/06/2023).

and fear are essential, they are not enough. All human beings have the right to be treated with dignity and respect.[28]

In development literature, freedom has special position and has affected new theories of development regarding essential needs and tendency of the human beings and Utilitarianism – Sen identified expansion of freedoms as basic goal and main means of development, by providing two reasons why freedom should be the primary element of development: first, the only acceptable evaluation of human progress is primarily and ultimately enhancement of freedom; second, the achievement of development is dependent on the free agency of people.[29] Freedom is the real opportunity that we have to accomplish what we value – it is authentic self-direction – the ability to shape one's own destiny as a person and a part of various communities.[30] Freedom is not a 'paper' freedom, it must be effective freedom, a real possibility. All formulations of capability have two parts: freedom and valuable beings and doings (functionings).[31]

## Section 2: The link between freedom, capability approach, and sustainable development Goals

This section dealt briefly with the connection or linkage between the useful concepts that form the theme of the paper.

### 2.1: Capability approach and sustainable development

[28] UN (2005) 'In larger freedom: Towards Development, Security and Human Rights for all – Report of the Secretary-General' www.refworld.org.
[29] Sen, A., note 14.
[30] Lima, Peru (2009), Summer School on Capability and Multidimensional Poverty: Oxford Poverty & Human Development Initiative, University of Oxford (OPHI).
[31] Ibid.

There have been increasing number of researchers and scholarly work on the potential of the capability approach (CA) as a theoretical framework for analysing sustainable development (SD).[32] It has also been emphasised about the transformative strength of the CA as an economically and politically people-centred approach and fundamental means to achieve SD.[33] CA is perceived to be a suitable framework to analyse the multiple links between human wellbeing and critical natural capital and, CA has been recommended as part of a normative and informative foundation for deliberative human development in a strong sustainable framework.[34] There are existing difficulties arising from a freedom-oriented view of sustainability; this includes argument by scholars on the impact of human life on nature.[35] More so, is the question about the meaning of intergenerational justice when measured in the currency of 'substantive freedoms' (capabilities) and raises the issue of collective responsibility and suggest ways to model and operationise the capability approach to sustainable development.[36]

Concerns have been raised by some scholars and professionals that there are a potential risks of the SDGs becoming unattainable goals if economic and social polices do not change direction from mere ideas to practicality in order to achieve the specific SDGs that will benefit those that are 'left behind' – including the poor, those facing inequality of any kind, the vulnerable, injustice, discrimination, unemployment, lack of education, disabled etc.[37]

[32] Mathias Seckler and Jurgen Volkert (2021), The Capability Approach: A Promising Foundation for Sustainable Development? Ecological Economics, Vol. 183.
[33] Belling, A.E et al (2018), Capabilities, Identity, Aspirations and Ecosystem Services: An Integrated Framework: Ecological Economics Vol. 147, 21-28.
[34] Pelenc, Jerome and Jerome Ballet (2015), Strong Sustainability, Critical Natural Capital and the Capability Approach, Vol. 122, 36-44.
[35] Ben Purvis, Yong Mao, and Darren Robinson (2019), Three Pillars of Sustainability: In Search of Conceptual Origins: Sustainability Science, Vol. 14, 681-695.
[36] Ortrud Lessmann and Felix Rauschmayer (2013), The Capability Approach and Sustainable Development (eds.) Routledge.
[37] See for example Sabina, Alkire, 'The Real Wealth of Nations' at https://www.sustainablegoals.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/030-031-SDGs-ALKIRE.pdf (26/05/2023); See also Ikejiaku, Brian (2009), The Concept 'Poverty' Towards Understanding in the Context of Developing Countries 'Poverty Qua Poverty': with some Comparative Evidence on Britain: Journal of Sustainable Development, Vol. 2(2), 3-13.

The CA and SD talk about individual wellbeing; this includes the well-being of the children – it is an accepted principle of domestic and international law and policy that welfare or best interest of the child must be the primary or paramount consideration in any decision made with regard to the child's upbringing. Whilst the best interest's standard has become a core principle of welfare law, what might constitute a child or young person's best interests is given very little formal shape or content. [38] It is argued that capabilities approach can give best interests assessment much needed normative content, thereby addressing many of the criticism directed towards the standard and promoting social justice.[39]

## 2.2: The relationship between freedom, capability, and sustainable development

Capabilities are the genuine freedoms that people must achieve their potential doings and beings. Real freedom in this respect is that one has all the required means necessary to achieve that doing or being if one wishes to.[40] Freedom allows individuals to equip themselves; for e.g., empowered to feel more capable to do things or make decisions, including contribution to sustainable development and/or SDGs. A full accounting of individual freedom must, of course go beyond the capabilities of personal living and pay attention to the person's other objectives (e.g., social goals not directly related to one's own life), but human capabilities constitute a vital part of individual freedom through sustainable development benefits.[41] This is because the current understanding of development is

[38] Michael Thomson, (2021), A Capabilities Approach to Best Interests Assessments: Legal Studies (Cambridge Journals), 41(2), 276-293.
[39] Ibid
[40] David, Crocker., (1995), Functioning and Capability: The Foundations of Sen's and Nussbaum's Development Ethic, Part 2; In Martha C. Nussbaum and Jonathan Glover (eds), Women, Culture, and Development: A Study of Human Capabilities: Oxford Academics.
[41] Amartya, Sen., (1993), 'Capability and Well-Being', In Martha Nussbaum, and Amartya Sen (eds), The Quality of Life: Oxford, 1993; online eds, Oxford Academic, 2003).

grounded in the idea that it should be seen as promoting a better quality of life for individuals, rather than only monetary gains.[42]

Development can be seen as a process of expanding the freedoms that people enjoy.[43] Concentrating on freedoms differentiates from narrower perspectives of development, such as identifying development with the growth of gross national product (GNP), or industrialisation, or with the rise in personal incomes, or with technological advance, or with social modernisation[44] – we submit that freedoms and all these narrow views of development require capabilities to thrive. In essence, if freedom is what development advances, then there is a major argument for concentrating on that overarching objective (which benefits from capabilities), rather than on some specific means, or some specially chosen list of instruments.[45]

Development requires freedom and capabilities to grow and innovate, but the removal of major sources of unfreedom, such as poverty and tyranny, poor economic opportunities and systematic social deprivation, neglect of public facilities and intolerance of repressive states.[46] The capability approach proposes the people's capability, their positive freedom, their ability to achieve values or approved outcomes, is the most appropriate measure of advantage – not their feelings nor their holding of resources nor achieved outcomes.[47] We postulate that capabilities and individual freedoms are engines that drive sustainable development (or SDGs).

[42] Pedro, lima., Gassica, Jesus., Camila Ortiz., Fernanda, Frascareli., Fernando Souza, and Enzo, Mariano., (2021), Sustainability, Vol.13(23), 13407.
[43] Amartya, Sen., (1999), Development as Freedom: Oxford University Press: Oxford.
[44] Ibid
[45] Ibid
[46] Des Gasper., (2009), From Valued Freedoms to Polities and Markets, the Capability Approach in Policy Practice: Dans Revue Tiers Monde, no. 198, 1285-302.
[47] Ibid

## Section 3: Hegemonic forces, hegemonic resilience, capability, and policies of inequalities

This section provides a brief account of the etymology of the term 'hegemony' and discusses how hegemonic forces can be viewed as mitigating certain characteristics of social risk and suggests 'hegemonic resilience' as an additional capability for consideration when adopting large-scale policies to address inequalities.

### 3.1: Understanding Hegemony

A good starting point is an account of the etymology of the word 'hegemony', which would direct us to Ancient Greece, where *hēgemonia*, or leadership through attachment or consent, was antithetical to *arkhē*, which implied governance by force[48]. Thus, a distinction from 'empire' was the only burden to carry within this vocabulary; it was not necessary for 'hegemony' to be distinguished from other governance-fluid forms of statehood, including 'oligarchy' or 'democracy'. In contemporary usage, however, hegemony and democracy (as in Trump / Squad example) can undertake more polarized connotations. For example, many political experts understand 'hegemony' as a form of domination, while insisting on an absence of domination, or more weakly, *non-domination*, as a criterion for 'democracy'[49]. This seems to be in accord with the rhetoric present in (both) party manifestoes and academic scholarship, where democracy is synonymous with *rectitude*, while hegemony symbolizes *denigration*. But the inherent paradox remains: the democratic process *itself* can be expected to produce social outcomes which are 'normatively undesirable' and hegemonic, so why do we appear to *continually* consent to its dominating effects? Furthermore, is it possible to move beyond this paradox to improve the efficacy of activist programs by abstracting

[48] *See* Anderson, Perry, (2017a), *The H-Word: The Peripeteia of Hegemony*. London: Verso Books.
[49] *See* Bohman, James, (2004), "Republican Cosmopolitanism." *Journal of Political Philosophy* 12(3):336-52; also See Tully, James. 2005. "Exclusion and Assimilation: Two Forms of Domination in Relation to Freedom." *Nomos* 46:191-229.

theoretically sound measures, with democracy or hegemony as a starting point? Considering these questions, this article presents a retheorization of hegemony, not as the mirrored irony of democracy, but rather as a balanced model for discerning the generative mechanisms of what is refer to as a *consent-domination apparatus* (CDA), which can be used within the framework of the current SDGs, within the purview of a critical realist paradigm.[50] The analysis will be based on the crux of ongoing debates over the natures of hegemony and activism: why do certain social groups appear to consent to political maneuvers, when those maneuvers are expected to dominate them or render their status unequal,[51] according to some normative social standard, and subsequently prompting activist behavior?

### 3.2: Hegemonies of Knowledge to address inequalities

In this section, we present these as the 'Hegemonies of Knowledge' (HoK) and extend them through the sociological foundations of freedom and power. The reference to 'Knowledge' alludes to the personification of hegemonic action, to demonstrate the way in which one group can dominate another through hegemony, by invoking *consent* for the knowledge of the former to supersede that of the latter. Following Foucault, knowledge is taken here as convergent to 'truth' within the axiology of his 'power-knowledge' construct[52]. The intention is to show that HoK do not simply represent 'yet another listing' of dimensions of power but are rather more robust in the sense that they are definitionally a *mutually exclusive* and *complete* subspace of power relationships. By this, (i) they are non-overlapping, so their meanings *cannot* be conflated, (ii) they span *all* potential 'goodness generation' and, (iii) *any* alternative representations of 'goodness generation' can be reinterpreted as 'linear'

[50] Collier, Andrew. 1994. *Critical Realism: An Introduction to Roy Bhaskar's Philosophy*. London: Verso.
[51] Haugaard, Mark. (2009). "Power and Hegemony." 239-55 in *The Sage Handbook of Power*, edited by S. R. Clegg and M. Haugaard. London: SAGE.
[52] May, Todd., (2006), *The Philosophy of Foucault*. Chesham: Acumen.

combinations of HoK. These four HoK are proposed as frameworks to help provide theoretical framings for the discussions of efforts and agendas to address inequalities across different political and social systems.

### 3.2.1 Hegemony of Rationality

Rationality as a 'goodness generating' operation relates to some application of a regularised *logic* or similarly, of some stable *traditions*. Under a hegemonic purview, rationality is embedded in a deep sense of 'justified belief', presenting conflation of knowledge with truth by treating the former as an *obviously* reasonable order of things[53]. Borne of the Enlightenment period and scientific revolution that followed, *rationality* was a silent paragon of early Marxist theories, as either Mannheim's 'free floating intelligentsia' who would hold the teleological keys to ideological synthesis[54], or the creeping vanguard of 'organic intellectuals' who would displace the incumbent hegemony of the bourgeoise[55]. For postmodern scholars, such thinking veers too closely to the dogma of conservative politics, and is simply imperialism disguised in a cognitive form.[56] Because rationality bears the hallmark of positive meaning-making, it is inherently, at inception, of a deontological nature and the knowledge of the hegemonic agent does not present itself as superior, but rather presents the knowledge of the subject as *inferior*, to *all* other knowledges.

[53] Aronowitz, Stanley., (1988), *Science as Power: Discourse and Ideology in Modern Society*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
[54] Baehr, Peter., (2013), "The Problem of" Unmasking" in" Ideology and Utopia": Karl Mannheim, Karl Jaspers and Hannah Arendt." *Sociologica* 7(1):1-33.
[55] Gramsci, Antonio., (1971), Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci. Translated by Q. Hoare and G. Nowell-Smith. London: Lawrence and Wishart.
[56] Santos, Boaventura de Sousa (2018). *The End of the Cognitive Empire: The Coming of Age of Epistemologies of the South*. Durham: Duke University Press.

This form of knowledge has been historically difficult to resist, as its own 'truth' is embedded in a deep sense of 'justified belief', using the example of the coloniser, that reinforced the more it succeeds in creating an 'evidentiary' existence for the 'self' via the subjugation of the 'other'. Indeed, the hegemony of rationality has taken many forms over time. Colonial assemblies founded monolithic decrees as to what constitutes 'sound' knowledge. This was defended by virtue of the establishment that "we [Britain] have gained everything by our superior knowledge"[57] and it was this superior knowledge which enabled the conquering of other lands, for the good of the Empire. Moreover, the inexorable march of science and technology meant that Indigenous knowledges in the colonial era could be demarcated as 'backward' or 'mythological'[58], and therefore staged as inadequate for the proletariat to depend on; this positioning legitimised colonial occupation of 'other' lands[59].

Whether reluctant or naive, colonial subjects were afforded opportunities or had *capabilities* to materially resist their oppressors by using their own knowledge against them. This stratagem was famously portrayed under Gandhi's political '*ahisma*' versus the British colonisers in India[60]. In many ways, a version of this hegemony of rationality is still institutionalised in academia, by virtue of the overreliance on quantitative methodologies for rigorous research.[61]

[57] Ashcroft, B., Griffiths, G., & Tiffin, H. (1995), *The post-colonial studies reader*. London: Taylor & Francis.
[58] Baber, Z. (1996), *The science of Empire: Scientific Knowledge, Civilization, and Colonial Rule in India*. New York: SUNY Press.
[59] Pratt-Clarke, M., (2010), *Critical Race, Feminism, and Education: A Social Justice Model*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan
[60] Gandhi, L. (1996), Concerning Violence: The Limits and Circulations of Gandhian" Ahisma" or Passive Resistance. *Cultural Critique* (35), 105-147.
[61] Slavin, R. E. (2005), *Evidence-based reform: Advancing the education of students at risk. Report Prepared for: Renewing Our Schools, Securing Our Future*. Retrieved from Washington, DC: Center for American Progress, Institute for America's Future:

### 3.2.2 Hegemony of Binarism

Binarism may originate from evolutionary efficiency, as a 'doctrine of natural existence', with bilateral symmetry being the convenient basis for both structural equilibrium and agentic choice; to do, or *not* to do[62]. In any circumstance, the 'simple' binary dyads are deemed to offer easier solutions to compromise through conflict theories, while any higher-order interactions taken as the basis of relational thought are more difficult to negotiate past. This extends to Western sociological thinking, where natural 'otherisation' permits the valorisation of the modern over the traditional, or the religious over the secular, even though triadic or quadric units may be more empirically robust[63]. For capabilities, this might be deemed as an extension of one's natural assumptions of binary choice. At the extreme, *standardisation* through binary thought is made compulsory and legislated, very often to the detriment of large social groups, as noted vehemently, for example, in poststructuralist feminist work[64].

The key insight for this hegemony is that the decision rule invoked by the oppressing knowledge is '*standardisation*', meaning that the West (or the 'self') becomes a baseline or benchmark of '*knowability*'. Any existing features of the Orient (the 'other') are displaced by a new reality of being *'non-Western*' (the 'non-self'), ameliorating the burden of retaining any more information than is '*necessary*'. The Orient can be '*re-constructed*' on demand using information about the West, by an unsophisticated rule of *negation*. Similar latitudes are taken with the discursive geopolitical displacement of the 'Third World' from the 'First

[62] Elbow, Peter., (1993), "The Uses of Binary Thinking." *Journal of Advanced Composition*:51-78.
[63] Berry, John W. (1997), "Immigration, Acculturation, and Adaptation." *Applied psychology: An international review* 46(1):5-34.
Chae, Ou-Byung., (2013) "Japanese Colonial Structure in Korea in Comparative Perspective." 396-414 in *Sociology and Empire: The Imperial Entanglements of a Discipline*, edited by G. Steinmetz. Durham: Duke University Press.
[64] Bowden, Peta and Jane Mummery. 2009. *Understanding Feminism*. London: Acumen.

World'[65], and the 'Global North' from the 'Global South'[66]; in both neologism pairs, the latter is insinuated as *derivative of*, and *subordinate to*, the former.

It is important to note that *generic* classification or bifurcation is *not a sufficient* criterion for the *standardising* and *exclusionary* power of the hegemony of binarism. In syntactic forms, the neutral 'man' is the baseline, and the vocabulary needed all three words for a complete gender meaning set. It was only in the Middle English period (11th to 15th century) that the word 'man' came to adopt the connotation of being 'male' *as well as* being neutral[67]; this etymological shift consequentially gave 'males' the precedent status as the '*standard human being*', with 'females' consigned to being 'not-male'. We can see, therefore, that these practices should not be taken as a 'given'; that while the nature of classification does manifest dis-*unity*, it does not necessarily generate dis-*parity*, until one class is defined as a benchmark against which 'others' are judged.

### 3.2.3. Hegemony of Performativity

The previous two HoK notably instigate a tensor of action *inwardly*, directed toward the subject from the hegemonic agent, which immunises itself in stasis, so that it becomes geometrically a fixed point. This is consistent with an antagonistic worldview of reality, which places pressure on the 'justified true belief' of the subject to aspire or conform, inviting the infinitism of skepticism as resistance[68]. A different underlying form of naturalization deflects this by discarding epistemological infinitism altogether, in favor of a

[65] Mignolo, W. D., & Walsh, C. E. (2018). *On dDecoloniality: Concepts, Analytics, Praxis*. United States of America: Duke University Press.
[66] Santos, B. S. (2006), *The rise of the global left: the World Social Forum and beyond*. New York: Zed Books.
[67] Durkin, P. (2009), *The Oxford Guide to Etymology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
[68] Turri, John and Peter D Klein., (2014), *Ad Infinitum: New Essays on Epistemological Infinitism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

pragmatic, naïve realism[69]; I refer to this as the hegemony of *performativity*. In this operative form, truth is transactional, and it becomes unnecessary to *a priori* apprehend a particular worldview. Instead, knowledge is pursued as a means to an end, *inevitably*, against some extrinsic measure of stylistic, aesthetic, or material viability[70]. Performativity is typically associated with capitalist ideals, and the reproach against it is vociferous in those domains where the marginalisation effects scale massively. Indeed, this hegemony is among the more transparent and deleterious, as it tends to operate in appositional cycles where responses to 'failed' hegemonic imperatives are themselves of a performative nature; for example, in austerity as a reaction to economic crises[71], or 'teaching to the test' as a reaction to high-stakes examination regimes[72]. The mechanism of 'goodness generation' here can be interestingly contrasted with that of binarism. In many regards the act of accounting for human capabilities can be seen as a form of performativity.

Performativity is also mistaken for other forms of cultural hegemony or social marginalisation. Consider the arguments from political analysts that the United States had become a '*postracial*' society following the 2008 Presidential election of Barack Obama[73]. On one hand, there was evidence of a concomitant *decrease in [psychological] implicit bias* against Blacks as represented through interpersonal interactions[74]. On the other hand, there is evidence that *overall anti-Black sentiment increased* during Obama's term in office given the

[69] Putnam, Hilary., (1994), "The Dewey Lectures 1994: Sense, Nonsense, and the Senses: An Inquiry into the Powers of the Human Mind." *The Journal of Philosophy* 91(9):445-517.
[70] Mulgan, Tim., (2007), *Understanding Utilitarianism*, Edited by J. Reynolds. Stocksfield: Acumen.
[71] Blyth, Mark., (2013), *Austerity: The History of a Dangerous Idea*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Warnock, Mary., (1967), *Existentialist Ethics*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
[72] Au, Wayne., (2009), *Unequal by Design: High-Stakes Testing and the Standardization of Inequality*. New York: Routledge.
[73] Wingfield, A. H., & Feagin, J. R. (2013), *Yes We Can?: White Racial Framing and the 2008 Presidential Campaign* (Second ed.). New York: Routledge.
[74] Plant, E. A., Devine, P. G., Cox, W. T., Columb, C., Miller, S. L., Goplen, J., & Peruche, B. M. (2009), The Obama effect: Decreasing implicit prejudice and stereotyping. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 45*(4), 961-964.

construal of political actions which advanced Black interests at the expense of Whites[75]. Thus, neither '*racism*' nor '*postracism*' can be absolutes. Although the *logic* of having a Black president in the Oval Office was no longer a foreign concept, the *culturally performative* bias of racial (dis)equity was still very much present in the mind of the White society. This is a subtle point that distinguishes the operation of performativity here from the fundamental economic materialism[76] '*interest-convergence principle*' which asserts that "blacks only make substantial progress against racial oppression when their [material] interests align with those of white elites"[77]. The 'interest-convergence principle' may *insinuate* elements of cultural performativity in the shadow of economics, but we aver that it is *exactly* the dedicated separation of material and cultural instruments of oppression that is needed within modern theory[78]. These examples demonstrate that the hegemony of performativity is tricky to isolate, from both other cultural and material hegemonies.

### 3.2.4 Hegemony of Informational Consequence

This presents as some extenuating maturation of pragmatism into morality, with the surreptitiously unconscious agenda of relegating the knowledge of the subject to that of a moral input; in other words, the knowledge or capability of *B* is reduced to information, *of consequence* to the knowledge or capability of *A*. The compelling danger here is that what may superficially seem humanist ignores the maleficent second-order effects, which are not accounted for in the normative framework. The pseudo-ethical channel makes this aspect of

[75] Tesler, M., & Sears, D. O. (2010), *Obama's Race: The 2008 Election and the Dream of a Post-Racial America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
Valentino, N. A., & Brader, T. (2011), The sword's other edge: Perceptions of discrimination and racial policy opinion after Obama. *Public Opinion Quarterly, 75*(2), 201-226.
[76] Bell Jr., D. A. (1980), Brown v. Board of Education and the interest-convergence dilemma. *Harvard Law Review, 93*(3), 518-533.
[77] Brown, K., & Jackson, D. D. (2013), The History and Conceptual Elements of Critical Race Theory. In M. Lynn & A. D. Dixson (Eds.), *Handbook of Critical Race Theory in Education*, 9-22. New York: Routledge.
[78] Said, E. W. (2001), *Reflections on exile: and other literary and cultural essays*. London: Granta Books.

naturalisation particularly tenacious and usually requires some official decree or legal intervention to displace or curb the tendency for relativism.

The revenant adage '*damned if you do and damned if you don't*' casts an ominous shadow in what is perhaps the most common form of the hegemony of informational consequence: economic aid. Humanitarian programmes in general endure harsh criticisms for their cavalier and wanton interventions into the crises of developing countries. This is because social and cultural contexts of native and Indigenous penury are collapsed into a matrix of data points which act as inputs for neoliberal analytics to provide 'ethical' assistance. This is perhaps one of the most compelling arguments against supranational institutions like the World Bank which are branded as being complicit with a form of "new imperialism"[79] by imposing a version of capitalist democracy and by not purposefully taking account of historical and sociocultural contexts in their advocation for reforms[80]. Indeed, as Moyo poignantly positions in 'Dead Aid':

> In a perfect world, what poor countries at the lowest rungs of economic development need is not a multiparty democracy, but in fact a decisive benevolent dictator to push through the reforms required to get the economy moving (unfortunately, too often countries end up with more dictator and less benevolence). The Western mindset erroneously equates a political system of multi-party democracy with high-quality institutions (for example, effective rule of law, respected property rights and an independent judiciary, etc.). But the two are not synonymous.[81]

Thus, democracy has become a misnomer for *progress*, and charitability for *sustainability*. Even smaller initiatives by individuals can have unapparent contrarian effects, as was the case with the 2005 campaign by celebrities, including Angelina Jolie and Sharon Stone, for

[79] Tikly, L. (2004), Education and the new imperialism. *Comparative education, 40*(2), 173-198.
[80] Edwards Jr., D. B. (2018), *Global Education Policy, Impact Evaluations, and Alternatives: The Political Economy of Knowledge Production*. (online): Palgrave Macmillan.
[81] Moyo, D. (2009), *Dead Aid: Why aid is not working and how there is a better way for Africa*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

the distribution of free mosquito nets in Africa (to help fight malaria), which hampered the local net manufacturing economy and displaced hundreds of workers from their jobs[82].

**Section 4: Conclusion**

In general, the capability approach (CA) centralises an individual's (or group's) functionings, and the freedom to achieve those functionings. The chapter identifies that one under-researched area is the expression of capabilities when constraints are imposed hegemonically, that is, when an individual (or group) appears to consent to having their choices limited because of some underlying sociocultural ideology. It proposes that the CA, while originally regarded as a 'thin' framework relating to an individual's 'States', has been progressively deployed in wider spaces of social welfare and policy development. Adopting an interdisciplinary theoretical and conceptual understanding of sustainable development (SD), capability approach (CA) and freedom, the chapter proceeds to analyse an extension of the capability approach framework that focusses on hegemonic forces and the implications for freedom of choice, whenever the CA is applied to social justice, particularly economic inequalities.

Whereas SD is mostly considered a connecting norm, which serves to reconcile other conflicting norms bordering on the environment, the economy and social development including human rights; the chapter finds that there are useful links between freedom, CA, and SD. It suggests that hegemonic forces are particularly relevant to the application of the CA against the UN's sustainable development goals (SDGs); specifically, reduced inequalities (Goal 10) under its 2030 Agenda for Sustainable

[82] Low, R. (2016), *Good Intentions Are Not Enough: Why Ee Fail At Helping Others*. Singapore: World Scientific Publishing Company.

Development, since it is generally under large-scale policy regime shifts that sociocultural inequalities are broken and renewed. The hegemonic analytical framework draws from four (‘4 Hs’) – hegemony of rationality (HR), hegemony of binarism (HB), hegemony of performativity (HP), and hegemony of informal consequence (HIC) to establish that new, less transparent hegemonies often emerge within policy changes that seek to address inequalities, and they typically embody a mitigating reaction to social risks emanating from policy change.