

**FREEDOM AND DEVELOPMENT: THEORETICAL, INSTITUTIONAL AND
SOCIO-ENVIRONMENTAL PERSPECTIVES**

**LIBERDADE E DESENVOLVIMENTO: PERSPECTIVAS TEÓRICAS,
INSTITUCIONAIS E SOCIOAMBIENTAIS**

**LIBERTAD Y DESARROLLO: PERSPECTIVAS TEÓRICAS, INSTITUCIONALES
Y SOCIOAMBIENTALES**

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Jarbas Rodrigues Gomes Cugula¹, Sandro Marcos Godoy², Gabriel Calvet de Almeida³

ABSTRACT

This article critically analyzes the relationship between development and freedom, understanding freedom as a constitutive element of an emancipatory and sustainable development model. Based on a transdisciplinary approach, the study is structured in three analytical axes: theoretical foundations of freedom, the role of institutions in guaranteeing substantive rights, and the environmental limits of economic growth. The first axis discusses the transition from negative to substantive freedom, emphasizing justice and autonomy. The second explores how structural inequalities restrict real freedoms and highlights the importance of inclusive and equitable institutions. The third addresses sustainability as a condition for intergenerational freedom, integrating ecological balance, ethical responsibility, and the rights of nature. The article concludes that true development is not measured only by economic indicators, but by the expansion of real freedoms, the democratization of opportunities, and the preservation of the ecological foundations that sustain human dignity and coexistence.

Keywords: Freedom. Development. Sustainability.

RESUMO

Este artigo analisa criticamente a relação entre desenvolvimento e liberdade, compreendendo a liberdade como componente essencial e estruturante do processo desenvolvimentista. Por meio de uma abordagem transdisciplinar, são examinadas três dimensões fundamentais: a concepção teórica da liberdade, o papel das instituições na efetivação das liberdades substantivas e os limites socioambientais ao crescimento econômico. No primeiro eixo, discute-se a transição da liberdade negativa para uma liberdade substantiva, vinculada à justiça social. Em seguida, investiga-se a influência das desigualdades estruturais sobre o acesso efetivo à liberdade, ressaltando a necessidade de instituições comprometidas com a equidade. Por fim, aborda-se a sustentabilidade como condição para a liberdade intergeracional, defendendo-se a integração entre justiça ambiental e direitos da natureza. Conclui-se que o desenvolvimento só pode ser considerado

¹ Doctorate. Universidade de Marília (UNIMAR). E-mail: jcugulaadv@hotmail.com
Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0009-0005-1264-8802> Lattes: <http://lattes.cnpq.br/2023343013306024>

² Post-doctorate in Law. Università degli Studi di Messina.

³ Master's in Law and Economics. Universidade de Marília (UNIMAR).

pleno quando articulado à ampliação concreta das liberdades reais, à redistribuição de oportunidades e à preservação das condições ecológicas que tornam possível a vida digna.

Palavras-chave: Liberdade. Desenvolvimento. Sustentabilidade.

RESUMEN

Este artículo analiza críticamente la relación entre desarrollo y libertad, entendiendo esta última como un componente esencial y estructurante del proceso de desarrollo. Mediante un enfoque transdisciplinario, se examinan tres dimensiones fundamentales: la concepción teórica de la libertad, el papel de las instituciones en la realización de las libertades sustantivas y los límites socioambientales al crecimiento económico. El primer eje aborda la transición de la libertad negativa a la libertad sustantiva, vinculada a la justicia social. A continuación, se investiga la influencia de las desigualdades estructurales en el acceso efectivo a la libertad, destacando la necesidad de instituciones comprometidas con la equidad. Finalmente, se aborda la sostenibilidad como condición para la libertad intergeneracional, defendiendo la integración de la justicia ambiental y los derechos de la naturaleza. La conclusión es que el desarrollo solo puede considerarse completo cuando se articula con la expansión concreta de las libertades reales, la redistribución de oportunidades y la preservación de las condiciones ecológicas que posibilitan una vida digna.

Palabras clave: Libertad. Desarrollo. Sostenibilidad.

1 INTRODUCTION

The binomial development and freedom emerges as one of the most instigating and complex debates in the contemporary human sciences, articulating ethical, economic, legal and political dimensions. Traditionally linked to economic advancement and institutional modernization, development has come to be analyzed in a critical and multidimensional way, incorporating factors such as quality of life, democratic participation, environmental sustainability, and social justice. In this new scenario, freedom ceases to occupy a peripheral place in the developmental debate and assumes a central role in the formulation of public policies and strategies for social transformation.

From a broader perspective, development can no longer be understood as simple material growth or economic efficiency. True progress is measured, above all, by the ability of societies to expand the real freedoms of their members — the freedom to live with dignity, to choose, to express oneself, to participate politically and to access fundamental goods. This conception resignifies the role of legal institutions, the State and the market, emphasizing not only the absence of coercion, but the effective presence of conditions for the exercise of individual and collective autonomy.

In the face of this paradigmatic shift, a deep reflection on the multiple meanings of freedom in the context of development is required. Freedom can be conceived as a universal value, as a subjective right, as an instrument of social emancipation or as a condition of economic efficiency. Each of these approaches carries with it different normative implications and different political orientations, especially with regard to state intervention, the protection of fundamental rights and the equitable distribution of social resources.

It is not too much to emphasize, at this point, that Brazilian art, especially Brazilian Popular Music (MPB), has always played (and why not say still plays) a relevant role in the construction of social consciousness and in the reflection on freedom and development. Poetry and music function as instruments of collective sensitization, capable of translating abstract concepts into experiential experiences that directly touch human subjectivity.

Vinícius de Moraes, in his famous poem "The Worker in Construction", for example, offers a poetic synthesis of the dialectic between development and freedom that permeates this entire study. The poet from Rio de Janeiro manages to poetize the dynamics of the construction of the worker's consciousness, demonstrating how awareness is simultaneously an individual and collective process of emancipation. The worker who "climbed with the houses that sprouted from his hand" but "did not know everything about his great mission"

represents the condition of alienation that prevents the full realization of substantive freedom (CALIBAN, 2020).

Furthermore, the transformation of the worker from "class in itself" to "class for itself" narrated in the poem echoes Sen's (2000) theoretical reflections on real capacities and freedoms. When the worker finally says "No!", the moment materializes when freedom ceases to be just formal and becomes substantive, capable of confronting structures of power and inequality. This time, it is clear that this artistic dimension of social consciousness reveals how Brazilian popular culture anticipated, in poetic language, many of the contemporary debates on human development and social justice.

This article aims to critically examine the conceptual entanglement between development and freedom, considering its philosophical foundations, institutional implications, and contemporary challenges. It is intended, therefore, to investigate how freedom can be understood as a constitutive element of development, and not only as its consequence. The analysis will be conducted based on a transdisciplinary approach, which articulates elements of law, economics, political science and social theory.

The central problem of the research lies in the tension between different models of freedom and their consequences for the design of development policies. On the one hand, there is a liberal conception, which values individual autonomy and the limitation of state power; on the other, more substantive views, which demand affirmative action by the State to guarantee minimum conditions of existence and equal opportunities. This tension reverberates directly on the structure of institutions and on the normative efficacy of fundamental rights.

As a general objective, it seeks to critically analyze the relationship between development and freedom, with emphasis on its theoretical and legal implications. Specific objectives include: i) examining the philosophical-political foundations that sustain different conceptions of freedom; ii) to identify the role of legal institutions in the realization of substantive freedoms; and iii) to discuss the contemporary limits of freedom in contexts of structural inequality and environmental crisis.

Methodologically, the research adopts a qualitative approach, of a theoretical-conceptual nature, based on critical literature review, documentary analysis and interdisciplinary articulation. The work will be structured in three chapters, corresponding to the theoretical foundation, institutional analysis and contemporary challenges. At the end,

conclusions and recommendations will be presented, aiming to contribute to the construction of a development model that, in fact, promotes freedom in the full sense.

2 THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF DEVELOPMENT AND FREEDOM

In recent decades, reflection on development has gone beyond the limits of economic growth and material productivity. By replacing purely quantitative indicators with broader criteria of well-being, authors propose that true progress should be measured by the expansion of the real freedoms available to individuals. Such a paradigm shift shifts the focus from accumulation to emancipation, articulating social, political and legal dimensions around the promotion of human dignity (SEN, 2000).

Amartya Sen's work inaugurates an innovative perspective by conceiving freedom as both a means and an end of development. In this approach, freedom is not limited to the absence of coercion, but implies effective access to capacities that allow subjects to live lives that they value. Education, health, food security and political participation, for example, are essential components of substantive freedom, and must be guaranteed by institutional structures and public policies that correct structural inequalities (SEN, 2000).

In this scenario, the analysis of freedom as a structuring element of development requires considering the multiple factors that condition access to real opportunities. The existence of historical, social and economic barriers often limits the possibility of choice and self-determination of individuals, making any definition of freedom that is restricted to the formal level insufficient. It is necessary to recognize that the full realization of freedom requires the elimination of legal obstacles, but also the creation of material and symbolic conditions that allow the flourishing of diverse life projects.

Thus, the contemporary debate on development shifts the focus from the simple absence of coercion to the effective promotion of capacities, considering the plurality of contexts and the complexity of social demands. By incorporating these variables, the understanding of the role of the State and institutions is expanded, which come to be seen as fundamental agents in the equalization of opportunities and in the construction of a fairer and more inclusive society.

This conception is significantly different from the classical formulations of economic liberalism, which understand freedom from a negative perspective, that is, as the absence of external interference. Friedrich Hayek, one of the main exponents of this tradition, argues that any attempt to plan or economically control society inevitably leads to serfdom. For him,

individual freedom resides in protection against arbitrariness, and the State must limit itself to guaranteeing the minimum legal order so that individuals can act autonomously in the market (HAYEK, 1990).

Milton Friedman, in line with Hayek, reinforces the idea that economic freedom constitutes the necessary basis for political freedom. His analysis is based on the principle that State intervention in the economy tends to restrict individual choices, compromising efficiency and personal autonomy. Friedman defends free choice as a fundamental right and proposes that systems based on competition and individual responsibility are more efficient in promoting social welfare than interventionist policies (FRIEDMAN; FRIEDMAN, 2015).

The contrast between Sen's perspectives and those of classical liberals evidences an epistemological tension regarding the role of the State and institutions in the construction of freedom. While Sen proposes a proactive role of the public power in the creation of equitable conditions, Hayek and Friedman attribute to the market the capacity for self-regulation and to economic freedom the status of the basic premise of a just society. This dichotomy is not merely theoretical: it reflects different conceptions of justice, citizenship and social responsibility (SEN, 2000; HAYEK, 1990; FRIEDMAN; FRIEDMAN, 2015).

The growing complexity of contemporary societies requires, however, an overcoming of these traditional dichotomies. Edgar Morin proposes a transdisciplinary and systemic approach, in which development should be understood as a multidimensional, dynamic and interdependent process. From this perspective, freedom cannot be thought of in isolation or linearly, but as part of a network of relationships between culture, nature, economy, technology and spirituality, whose effects are unpredictable and often contradictory (MORIN, 2013).

For Morin, the challenge is to integrate knowledge and recognize that humanity's problems cannot be solved within watertight disciplinary compartments. Freedom, in this context, must be reconceptualized not only as an individual right, but as a collective responsibility for the sustainability of life on the planet. This implies recognizing that there are freedoms that, when absolutized, can compromise the social fabric, the ecological balance and the very survival of future generations (MORIN, 2013).

The tropicalist movement, led by Caetano Veloso and Gilberto Gil, offers a unique perspective on the tension between tradition and modernity in the Brazilian development process (DAVINO; FERREIRA, 2020). Tropicália represented an anthropophagic synthesis

that combined "the old and the new, the national and the global", establishing a creative dialogue with the country's cultural contradictions (LEORNE, 2025).

Caetano Veloso, in "Coração Civil", poetically expresses many of the ideals that permeate the substantive conception of freedom: "I want utopia, I want everything and more / I want happiness in the eyes of a father / I want joy for many happy people / I want justice to reign in my country". There is no denying that such verses articulate, in accessible language, the inseparable relationship between individual freedom and collective well-being, between personal development and social justice.

Therefore, the tropicalist vision anticipated, in the cultural field, many of the contemporary reflections on sustainable and inclusive development. By rejecting both retrograde nationalism and uncritical modernization, the movement proposed a third way that recognized the complexity of peripheral societies and the need for their own paths to development. This stance is echoed in Morin's (2013) reflections on the need to overcome simplifying dichotomies and embrace complexity as a fundamental characteristic of contemporary social processes.

The recognition of culture as a strategic dimension of development shows that freedom and progress cannot be dissociated from the collective identities and symbolic expressions of a people. Valuing cultural diversity, creativity, and intangible heritage contributes to the construction of a social environment that is more open to innovation and plurality of perspectives.

In this sense, public policies aimed at strengthening culture and education play a central role in the democratization of opportunities, promoting social inclusion and respect for differences. By integrating cultural and social aspects into the debate on development, the horizon of possibilities for the realization of a freedom that is, in fact, substantive and universal, capable of responding to the challenges imposed by historical inequalities and the accelerated dynamics of contemporary transformations, is expanded.

Thus, understanding the theoretical foundations of freedom in the context of development requires a critical reading, which considers both the values of individual autonomy and the imperatives of social justice and environmental preservation. The articulation between these dimensions points to a development model that is not limited to economic efficiency, but that is realized in the concrete expansion of human possibilities, in the reduction of inequalities and in the construction of a legal order guided by solidarity, diversity and sustainability.

3 FREEDOM IN THE STRUCTURE OF INSTITUTIONS AND THE REDUCTION OF INEQUALITIES

The realization of freedom as a substantive vector of development depends directly on the structure and functioning of political, legal and economic institutions. Freedom, in this context, is not limited to mere individual autonomy or the absence of coercion, but manifests itself concretely when the legal-institutional system guarantees equal conditions for the exercise of rights. In this way, it is possible to argue that the institutional architecture plays a decisive role in the construction of real freedoms, overcoming the liberal vision restricted to formal freedom (BERCOVICI, 2005).

The effectiveness of political, juridical and economic institutions in promoting substantive freedom depends on their formal existence, but above all on the quality of their operation and the ability to adapt to social demands. Institutions that are inclusive, transparent and responsive are essential to ensure that the rights provided for in the legal system are translated into concrete practices of equality and participation. In addition, the dynamic interaction between the State and civil society is fundamental for the construction of an environment in which freedom is not a privilege of a few, but a condition accessible to all.

Thus, institutional strengthening should be thought of as a continuous process of improvement, which articulates mechanisms of social control, transparency, and distributive justice, ensuring that political and economic structures regulate, but effectively promote, human and social development.

In the Brazilian case, the 1988 Constitution enshrined an economic order based on social justice, the social function of property and the reduction of inequalities. This normative arrangement, called the Economic Constitution, imposes limits on the logic of the market and legitimizes the State's action as an agent that promotes development. For Bercovici, this constitutional framework is not neutral, but guided by the search for a more just society, in which institutions are called upon to operate in favor of substantive freedom and citizen inclusion (BERCOVICI, 2005).

By shifting the focus to the issue of economic inequality, it is found that the concentration of income and wealth constitutes one of the main obstacles to the realization of freedom in its material dimension. Excessive inequality erodes social cohesion, undermines intergenerational mobility and distorts the democratic functioning of institutions. Thomas Piketty shows that, over the last decades, there has been a widening of wealth

disparities, with profound implications for access to opportunities, political voice and fundamental rights (PIKETTY, 2014).

Moreover, the persistence of economic inequality limits access to material resources, but also compromises the effectiveness of political participation, creating an environment in which disadvantaged voices are systematically marginalized. This asymmetry of economic power translates into inequality in access to information, influence over public decisions, and capacity for social mobilization, weakening democratic mechanisms and representativeness.

Furthermore, the structural imbalance between social groups generates a concentration of power that hinders the implementation of inclusive public policies and perpetuates the exclusion of significant portions of the population. In this way, economic inequality becomes a central factor in the reproduction of cycles of political exclusion, eroding the basis of citizenship and compromising the construction of fairer and more democratic societies.

Political freedom, in this context, becomes vulnerable to institutional capture by economic elites, who shape public policies according to narrow interests. This dynamic produces a vicious cycle in which inequality fuels exclusion, and exclusion reinforces inequality, undermining the foundations of democratic citizenship. Piketty argues that, without effective mechanisms of redistribution and fiscal control, institutions begin to operate in a regressive manner, privileging the maintenance of historical privileges and restricting the possibilities of social transformation (PIKETTY, 2014).

Joseph Stiglitz reinforces this perspective by analyzing the structural impacts of inequality on the institutional and economic performance of countries. For the author, societies marked by extreme asymmetries face difficulties in establishing equitable, transparent and effective institutions. Freedom, under such conditions, becomes the privilege of the few, while the majority remains imprisoned in contexts of economic exclusion, educational precariousness and low political representation. Thus, the poor distribution of income not only compromises development, but sabotages the very idea of freedom in its socially relevant expression (STIGLITZ, 2012).

In the midst of this scenario, it is possible to highlight that MPB played a relevant role during the Brazilian military dictatorship, functioning as a channel of expression and cultural resistance in a period of institutional repression. Artists such as Chico Buarque have developed sophisticated poetic strategies to circumvent censorship and keep social criticism

alive, demonstrating how art can preserve spaces of freedom even in authoritarian contexts (PLAGGE, 2025).

The experience of Brazilian cultural resistance concretely illustrates how democratic institutions depend on formal structures, but also on a political culture that values plurality and public debate. The protest songs denounced injustices, but politically educated an entire generation, contributing to the formation of a democratic consciousness that would be fundamental in the process of redemocratization (PLAGGE, 2025).

Milton Nascimento and Clube da Esquina exemplify how art can articulate political resistance with aesthetic innovation. Combining MPB, rock, jazz, and folk influences, the movement created a unique musical language that challenged both repression and dominant aesthetic standards. Songs like "Coração de Estudante" became symbols of struggle and hope, demonstrating the power of art to sustain utopia even in the darkest moments (PLAGGE, 2025).

Thus, this cultural dimension of resistance highlights fundamental aspects about the nature of democratic institutions. They are not sustained only through legal norms, but need a cultural substrate that values diversity, creativity and citizen participation. The Brazilian experience demonstrates how popular culture can function as a guardian of democratic memory and as an instrument of political education.

In this sense, it becomes evident that the strengthening of institutions cannot be dissociated from public policies oriented to equity. It is not enough for the norms to recognize rights; there must be structures capable of making them feasible and accessible to all citizens. State action must be redesigned in order to reverse historical inequalities and guarantee objective conditions for the full exercise of freedom. This process requires institutional reconstruction based on principles of distributive justice, social responsibility and substantive inclusion (BERCOVICI, 2005; STIGLITZ, 2012; PIKETTY, 2014).

The idea of freedom is often associated with the expansion of individual choices and the ability to consume goods and services in an increasingly diverse market. However, this conception is limited in the face of the environmental and social impacts of the continuous growth model. The depletion of natural resources, the climate crisis and global inequality demonstrate that the unrestricted exercise of freedom of consumption can paradoxically compromise the conditions that sustain the very life and freedom of future generations (LATOUCHE, 2009).

The imperative of economic growth, widely naturalized as synonymous with progress, needs to be critically reassessed. Overcoming this logic requires a transition to a more conscious development model, which values collective well-being, responsible autonomy, and reconnection with ecological limits. Such an approach proposes an inversion of values, replacing the cult of excess with a culture of sufficiency, sobriety and solidarity (LATOUCHE, 2009).

Freedom, in this context, should not be confused with the mere absence of restrictions or with the unlimited possibility of individual choices. It is materialized when there are material, social and ecological conditions that allow subjects to carry out their life projects in balance with others and with the natural environment. The expansion of real freedoms is necessarily conditioned to the preservation of common goods and the construction of a sustainable and equitable coexistence (LATOUCHE, 2009).

This vision demands the incorporation of intergenerational responsibility as a structuring element of public policies and legal institutions. The protection of the environment and the rational management of resources cannot be seen as programmatic options, but as binding duties of the State and society. Freedom, in order to be fully realized, requires the guarantee of a viable future, with minimum conditions for human flourishing in all its dimensions (FREITAS, 2012).

The normative structure must therefore transcend the short-term logic of exploitation and assume ethical commitments over time. This means recognizing that contemporary freedom implies conscious choices that respect the precautionary principle, intergenerational equity, and the intrinsic value of ecosystems. Sustainability is no longer just a political guideline to become the legal basis of a new institutional rationality (FREITAS, 2012).

The global ecological crisis cannot be understood solely as a result of the deterioration of natural resources. It expresses, in a deeper way, a civilizational and subjective crisis, in which the fragmentation of relationships, the trivialization of life and the commodification of social bonds have eroded collective sensibility. Freedom, in this scenario, requires not only structural transformation, but also the reconstruction of meanings, affections and ways of being in the world (GUATTARI, 1990).

It is necessary to break with the notion that nature and humanity occupy separate and hierarchical spheres. Freedom acquires full meaning when recognized as a relational experience, permeated by bonds of respect, interdependence and care for all forms of life. This understanding challenges the normative structures centered on anthropocentrism and

establishes an ethics of coexistence, in which the natural environment ceases to be an object and becomes a subject of rights (GUATTARI, 1990).

In the face of this conceptual reconstruction, the challenge of the twenty-first century lies in articulating freedom, justice and sustainability in the same normative horizon. Development, in order to be effectively liberating, needs to operate with new ethical, political and legal parameters, capable of guaranteeing not only immediate well-being, but the continuity of life in its diversity. Only with the integration between human rights, rights of nature and intergenerational justice will it be possible to consolidate a truly emancipatory model of coexistence.

4 FREEDOM, SUSTAINABILITY AND THE RIGHTS OF NATURE: CONTEMPORARY LIMITS TO GROWTH

The contemporary conception of freedom is tensioned in the face of the environmental, social and civilizational challenges imposed by the dominant model of development. The association between freedom and the expansion of consumption, which permeates hegemonic political and economic discourses, begins to reveal profound contradictions when confronted with the reality of ecological collapse and structural inequality. Freedom understood as the unlimited multiplication of individual choices, especially in the field of consumption, ignores the physical limits of the planet and compromises the possibilities of a dignified existence for future generations (LATOUCHE, 2009).

The environmental crisis is not limited to the scarcity of natural resources, but represents a crisis of meaning, in which the values that sustained the modern ideal of progress have become instruments of destruction. The expansion of production and material wealth, detached from ethical and ecological parameters, compromises the very foundations of human freedom. The notion of linear and cumulative progress needs to be reviewed in the light of an alternative rationality, guided by principles of sufficiency, reciprocity and balance (LATOUCHE, 2009).

Freedom, in this new horizon, is no longer understood as the simple absence of external interference and is now linked to the ability to live consciously and responsibly in relation to others and the environment. Its implementation requires not only guaranteed rights, but also collective and structural conditions that preserve the common good. Environmental justice and the recognition of planetary limits thus become inseparable elements of the free human experience (LATOUCHE, 2009).

From a legal point of view, sustainability is presented as a structuring principle of the new conception of freedom. The requirement to preserve the environment for future generations does not stem only from a technical or environmental concern, but from an ethical and constitutional commitment to the continuity of life in its multiple forms. Freedom is not fully realized when dissociated from intergenerational responsibility, the duty of precaution and respect for the natural cycles that sustain human existence (FREITAS, 2012).

This responsibility transcends the scope of individual decisions and imposes a profound institutional reconfiguration. The legal system must be able to incorporate the temporal dimension of freedom, recognizing that the present use of natural resources directly impacts the collective future. In this context, the role of public policies and legal institutions is to ensure the balance between development and conservation, ensuring that today's rights do not make tomorrow's rights unfeasible (FREITAS, 2012).

The reductionist approach to freedom as an isolated subjective right is incompatible with the complexity of contemporary social and ecological relations. Freedom should be thought of as the result of dynamic interactions between individuals, collectivities and nature, which implies its reconceptualization as a relational, situated and ecological value. This understanding requires the displacement of a paradigm centered on the individual to another oriented by cohabitation and interdependence (GUATTARI, 1990).

Environmental deterioration, in this sense, should also be understood as a deterioration of social and subjective relations. The ecological imbalance reflects a broader crisis, marked by the fragmentation of bonds, the reduction of sensitivity and the instrumentalization of human relationships. Freedom, when limited to the logic of the market and the reproduction of consumption patterns, loses its emancipatory power and becomes a vector of alienation and destruction (GUATTARI, 1990).

The relationship between art and environmental awareness in MPB offers unique perspectives on the contemporary challenges of sustainability. Maria Bethânia, in "Purificar o Subaé", articulates in a poetic way the criticism of the predatory development model and the need for a new relationship with nature. The song denounces the "empty progress that brings environmental destruction" and invokes the protection of Iemanjá, integrating spiritual, cultural and ecological dimensions.

Gilberto Gil, especially in "Refloresta", offers an urgent poetic appeal to environmental preservation: "Keeping what remains standing is not enough", reinforcing the need for proactive ecological restoration actions. The song highlights the insufficiency of palliative

measures in the face of the magnitude of environmental destruction, echoing theoretical reflections on the limits of economic growth.

The environmental poetry of MPB anticipated, in accessible language, many of the contemporary debates on sustainability and the rights of nature, works that demonstrate how artistic sensibility can capture social trends and contradictions even before they are systematized by academic thought (FERNANDES, 2021). The reference to the orishas and Afro-Brazilian spirituality, present in several compositions, suggests alternative ways to think about the relationship between humanity and nature, overcoming the Western dichotomy between culture and environment.

Thinking about freedom from the perspective of ecology requires an integration between the environmental, social and mental dimensions. The reestablishment of an ethical relationship with nature, with the other and with oneself becomes a condition for the construction of a more just, plural and sustainable society. In this scenario, the law assumes the task not only of regulating conduct, but of stimulating the reconstruction of an ecological sensibility capable of sustaining new forms of coexistence and freedom (GUATTARI, 1990).

The protection of freedom in its substantive dimension cannot dispense with the action of institutions capable of guaranteeing material equity and ecological balance. The contemporary institutional structure, historically shaped by short-term interests and economistic orientations, demonstrates a low capacity to deal with the challenges of sustainability and environmental justice. In order for freedom to be broadly guaranteed, it is necessary for the normative apparatus to recognize the centrality of the environment as an existential and legal support for human dignity (FREITAS, 2012; BERCOVICI, 2005).

The disconnect between economic development and distributive justice accentuates the fragility of societies in the face of the climate and institutional crisis. The accumulation of wealth in the hands of a few compromises equal access to essential environmental goods, such as clean water, clean air, and arable land. Environmental inequality adds to economic inequality, restricting the real freedoms of the majority and transferring the ecological costs of consumption to the most vulnerable populations (PIKETTY, 2014; STIGLITZ, 2012).

By adopting economic growth as the main measure of success, many public policies neglect the ecological and social impacts of their decisions. This reductionist logic obscures the fact that full freedom is not sustained on degraded material bases. The concept of freedom requires structural and institutional conditions that are not only formal, but that

ensure that all people have the opportunity to choose lifestyles compatible with mutual respect and the conservation of life support systems (SEN, 2000; LATOUCHE, 2009).

Law, in this context, plays a fundamental role in mediating between immediate interests and long-term commitments. It is a matter of rethinking the very purpose of the legal norm, shifting it from a merely regulatory function to a function that promotes sustainability and intertemporal freedom. This implies incorporating intergenerational justice as a vector for the interpretation of fundamental rights, demanding from public institutions a new ethos aimed at the preservation of life in a broader sense (FREITAS, 2012; BERCOVICI, 2005).

The articulation between freedom and sustainability also requires an epistemological rupture. The modern paradigm, centered on the fragmentation of knowledge and the supremacy of instrumental rationality, limits the understanding of ecological complexity and the interdependencies that characterize social and natural systems. A more integrated approach requires recognizing that environmental, economic and social crises are interconnected and that isolated solutions tend to reinforce the problems they intend to solve (GUATTARI, 1990; MORIN, 2013).

In this sense, thinking about freedom in ecological terms implies accepting the existence of limits. These limits should not be seen as obstacles, but as conditions for human survival and flourishing. A truly free society is one that recognizes its insertion in a web of relationships that includes the environment and other living beings, adopting ethical attitudes that prioritize coexistence and care as the foundations of autonomy (LATOUCHE, 2009; GUATTARI, 1990).

Sustainability-driven freedom cannot be captured by technocratic discourse or the promise that technological innovation alone will solve environmental problems. Although technology is a strategic ally, it is in the political and legal field that regulatory frameworks capable of guaranteeing climate justice, the equitable distribution of responsibilities, and the recognition of the rights of nature must be established. The challenge is to build institutional models that integrate science, ethics and democratic participation (STIGLITZ, 2012; FREITAS, 2012).

The contemporary reformulation of the idea of freedom requires overcoming its reduction to an abstract and formal concept, detached from the concrete structures that sustain it. When freed from the material, institutional and ecological conditions that make it possible, freedom becomes the privilege of the few and a discursive façade for the

maintenance of inequalities. The modern challenge is to reroot it in the field of environmental justice, collective responsibility and intergenerational solidarity (SEN, 2000; FREITAS, 2012).

The effects of climate change, resource scarcity and environmental degradation already impact millions of people around the world, especially marginalized communities, who have historically had restricted access to the commons. Freedom, in these contexts, becomes unattainable. The liberal discourse that celebrates individual autonomy without considering structural barriers proves to be insufficient in the face of the urgency of building a model of coexistence that is simultaneously fair, viable and sustainable (PIKETTY, 2014; STIGLITZ, 2012).

In this scenario, the concept of environmental justice gains centrality by integrating the ecological dimension with social and institutional struggles for freedom. This perspective allows us to understand that the forms of oppression and exclusion are not limited to the economic or legal field, but include the unequal distribution of environmental damage and access to natural resources. Freedom, therefore, also depends on justice in the distribution of environmental goods essential to life (LATOUCHE, 2009; GUATTARI, 1990).

The very notion of development must be reconfigured based on these parameters. Instead of the incessant search for growth, it is necessary to build an idea of development that privileges collective well-being, the balance of ecosystems, and the preservation of human rights and the rights of nature (GODOY, 2025). Such a perspective requires the adoption of public policies based on the ethics of sufficiency, the mitigation of damage and the prevention of socio-environmental risks (FREITAS, 2012; LATOUCHE, 2009).

The modern conception of law needs to keep up with this transformation. Traditional law, centered on property, consumption and autonomy detached from the collectivity, is limited in the face of the complexity of contemporary problems. The guarantee of freedom requires the reinterpretation of fundamental rights in the light of sustainability, considering nature as a legal subject and not only as an object of use and exploitation (GUATTARI, 1990; BERCOVICI, 2005).

In this sense, rethinking freedom in times of environmental crisis implies repositioning human beings within the web of life, recognizing their dependence on natural conditions and their responsibility towards them. This repositioning requires ruptures with dominant paradigms and the construction of a new model of rationality, which values plurality, interdependence and care as the foundations of democratic and ecological coexistence (MORIN, 2013; GUATTARI, 1990).

Institutions, in turn, must be reformulated to play an active role in the construction of socially and ecologically committed freedom. The State's action cannot be restricted to regulatory neutrality, but must incorporate a redistributive, sustainable and participatory logic, promoting inclusive policies that guarantee equitable access to environmental goods, information and democratic deliberation (BERCOVICI, 2005; STIGLITZ, 2012).

Consolidating a libertarian vision of development implies overcoming the false dichotomy between individual freedom and the collective good. Contrary to what classical liberal currents advocate, the protection of the common good – especially with regard to the environment – does not represent a threat to freedom, but its condition. The freedom of each person can only be realized in a livable, socially just and environmentally balanced world. Thus, real freedoms become inseparable from environmental justice and harmonious cohabitation with nature.

The contribution of Brazilian art to the debate on freedom and development transcends aesthetic value and takes on fundamental epistemological and political dimensions. Poetry and music work as mediators between theoretical reflection and lived experience, making complex concepts accessible and mobilizing affections necessary for social transformation.

Vinícius de Moraes' "Hiroshima Rose" exemplifies how art can address global issues with local sensitivity, connecting the struggle for world peace with the search for social justice in Brazil (VERSOS..., 2023). The poem uses constructivist techniques that reinforce its political message, demonstrating how form and content are articulated in the construction of a poetics committed to social transformation.

The Brazilian cultural experience suggests that authentic development cannot do without the artistic and symbolic dimension. The cities sung by Vinícius de Moraes, the utopias dreamed of by Caetano Veloso, the resistances narrated by Chico Buarque and the ecologies invoked by Bethânia and Gil make up a collective imaginary that guides aspirations and projects for the future.

This time, this synthesis between art and social consciousness points out that substantive freedom is not only realized through public policies and institutional arrangements, but also through the construction of new meanings, affections and imaginaries. Brazilian social poetry, from Castro Alves to the present day, demonstrates how art can function as an "instrument of revolution", capable of awakening consciences and mobilizing transformative energies (GETENS; MONTOVANI, 2023).

Closing this chapter means recognizing that the debate on freedom and development can no longer ignore the limits of the planet or the ethical requirements of coexistence. Freedom is not achieved in isolation, but in the relationship with others and with the environment in which one lives. Incorporating sustainability as a constitutive value of freedom is, at the same time, a gesture of historical lucidity and a civilizing imperative. The future of freedom depends, to a large extent, on our ability to reconfigure the horizons of development, guiding them by criteria of justice, balance and interdependence.

5 CONCLUSION

The present investigation started from the proposal to understand freedom as a constitutive element — and not just a result — of development, going beyond the traditional paradigms centered on economic expansion. The theoretical path made it possible to show that the concept of freedom, when detached from the material, social and ecological conditions that sustain it, becomes abstract and inoperative in the face of contemporary inequalities and crises. Development, in order to be effectively liberating, requires the recognition of freedom as a relational value, situated and conditioned by historical and environmental reality.

The initial analysis demonstrated that the substantive conception of freedom involves not only the absence of coercion, but the presence of real capacities for individuals to carry out their life projects. This approach shifts the focus from formal freedom to effective freedom, incorporating variables such as access to essential services, political participation, and distributive justice. Thus, development ceases to be an end in itself and is conceived as a means to the full realization of human autonomy.

When analyzing the role of institutions, it was found that they constitute the normative and organizational foundation for the construction of freedom. Legal and political structures must guarantee not only declaratory rights, but objective conditions for their universal exercise. When institutions become refractory to equity or captured by concentrated interests, freedom is emptied of meaning and development begins to reproduce historical inequalities. Therefore, institutional effectiveness must be permanently guided by the principles of social justice, substantive democracy, and pluralism.

On the socioeconomic level, it has become evident that freedom finds serious limits when confronted with the persistence of extreme inequalities. The concentration of income, power, and opportunities reduces access to full citizenship, compromises democratic

legitimacy, and weakens the mechanisms of collective deliberation. In addition, the overlap between economic inequality and environmental degradation increases the vulnerability of marginalized populations, demonstrating that freedom cannot be thought of in isolation from the distributive and ecological issue.

Sustainability, in turn, proved to be an indispensable dimension of freedom. In times of climate emergency, the preservation of the environment ceases to be a peripheral ethical imperative and becomes a precondition for the continuity of human and non-human life. Future freedom depends directly on the current ability to responsibly manage natural resources, mitigate ecological damage, and institute legal mechanisms capable of protecting the rights of nature and ensuring intergenerational justice.

The articulation between freedom and the environment requires, therefore, a paradigm shift. It is about replacing the logic of exploitation with the principle of care, recognizing the interdependence between all forms of life. Freedom can no longer be conceived as an unrestricted license for action, but as a conscious commitment to the limits of the planet and to the maintenance of equitable conditions of existence for present and future generations. This imposes on law and public policies the task of incorporating ecological ethics as a normative foundation.

In addition, the notion of freedom needs to be reinterpreted in the light of contemporary complexity, which integrates economic, cultural, institutional, subjective and environmental dimensions. The idea that freedom can be guaranteed without profoundly transforming the modes of production, consumption and coexistence is unsustainable. The challenge is to build a shared, inclusive and responsible freedom, supported by structures that recognize the value of diversity and life in common as the foundations of democratic coexistence.

It follows from this that there is no genuine development without real freedom, and there is no real freedom without justice, equity, and sustainability. The construction of a truly free society depends on institutions committed to social transformation, the overcoming of structural inequalities and the incorporation of the environment as a subject of rights. Only through the integration of these dimensions will it be possible to move towards a development model that does not exclude, does not destroy, and that is capable of sustaining freedom as a collective, enduring, and fully realizable value.

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