



DEMOCRACY BREADTH AS AN ESSENTIAL FACTOR FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE STATE

AMPLITUDE DEMOCRÁTICA COMO FATOR ESSENCIAL PARA O DESENVOLVIMENTO SOCIAL DO ESTADO

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ABSTRACT:

This paper investigates the relationship between economic development and democracy. Grounded in Wendy Brown's theoretical framework, which posits political equality as the essence of democracy, the study argues that democratic regimes must be fundamentally driven by social and political inclusion. The text demonstrates that neoliberalism has stripped democracy of its core, precipitating global economic and social crises. Drawing upon Gilberto Bercovici's theory of developmentalism, state intervention is proposed as a structural remedy. These theoretical premises are empirically assessed by benchmarking the 2022 Democracy Index against selected macroeconomic and social indicators. By comparing Brazil to the thirty highest-ranked countries in the index, the research highlights a strong correlation between social development and democratic robustness. Although the direction of causality remains indeterminate, the findings suggest that social policy must be prioritized within state agendas aimed at achieving sustainable economic development.

Key-words: Developmentalism; Economic Development; Social State; Democracy; Neoliberalism.





RESUMO:

Este artigo propõe investigar a relação entre desenvolvimento e democracia. Parte-se da conceituação de democracia por Wendy Brown, cuja essencialidade democrática é a igualdade política, defendendo o regime democrático pautado pela inclusão social e política. Demonstra-se que o neoliberalismo esvaziou a democracia de sua essencialidade, gerando crise econômica e social por todo o mundo, aponta-se, como solução para crise, a intervenção estatal conforme a teoria do desenvolvimento apresentada por Gilberto Bercovici. Parametrizam-se essas teorias pela referência ao índice democrático em comparação a indicadores econômicos e não econômicos, e, ao comparar o Brasil com os trinta países mais bem ranqueados no índice democrático de 2022, busca-se demonstrar que há relação direta entre desenvolvimento e democracia, não podendo saber qual é causa e qual é consequência, devendo as questões sociais serem postas em primeiro plano nas políticas estatais de quem visa o desenvolvimento econômico.

Palavras-chave: Desenvolvimentismo; Desenvolvimento econômico; Estado social; Democracia; Neoliberalismo.

1 INTRODUCTION

This article investigates the relationship between democracy and development, as well as its systemic implications. It adopts a developmentalist perspective grounded in the theoretical framework proposed by Gilberto Bercovici. From this standpoint, analyzing economic development strictly requires an examination of social development. Consequently, the research transitions to conceptualizing democracy as a concrete material practice. To achieve social development, democracy must operate as a mechanism for the participatory inclusion of diverse social sectors, rather than functioning merely as a formal system of government.

It is therefore imperative to analyze contemporary democracy, specifically regarding the political inclusion of marginalized groups. This approach relies on the theoretical contributions of American philosopher Wendy Brown, notably her work *In the Ruins of Neoliberalism*. Brown delineates the current democratic crisis exacerbated by the global consolidation of neoliberal ideology, alongside its severe social ramifications.

Having underlined the idea of democracy on which this work will be based, Bercovici's reading is presented, based on developmentalism. Moving away from the neoliberal economic orthodoxy, Bercovici proposes an idea of economic law in Brazil based on the 1988 Constitution, by which the State must promote Development. From this perspective, it is necessary for the economy to be seen in a broad way – not as





mere economic growth. Ultimately, we reach the core to be exposed in the article: the dichotomy between economic growth and economic development, through the juxtaposition of democracy and social development.

To assess the theories discussed, comparative indexes published on a global scale are analyzed. The Democracy Index¹, from the British editorial board The Economist, is referred to as a central point to the others. Not without critical attention to the centrality of such an index, comparison with others that are highlighted to diagnose the economic or social state of a country is necessary. With such parameters, the investigation seeks to address the relationship between the theories presented and the (apparent) numerical-methodological reality of the data that can guide political and economic decisions in different countries.

As a research problem, the question is whether a country's democracy (even when measured using the parameters of liberal democracy) is related to its development (social and economic). The objective of the research is to demonstrate the essentiality of democracy (as collective political participation) for the economic objectives of a society. To this end, the methodology used for the research was the bibliographical review of theoretical references, as well as the comparison of data obtained periodically on a global scale about the States, which demonstrate parameters for comparison between democracy, non-economic indexes and economic indexes. From the comparisons of the indexes, it is concluded that democracy has a close relationship with social parameters and economic parameters that consider inequality, distancing itself from purely economic parameters (on which economic theories that privilege economic growth could be based).

2 DEMOCRACY AS INCLUSION

Difficult to define (or difficult to agree on the definition), democracy can have its conceptualization altered either by bias or by the historical period - e.g., the democracy of ancient Greece is not the same democracy arising from modernity, even if the spelling is the same or one inspired the other. This is, etymologically, the "government of the people" (or government by the people). However, by reading Wendy Brown

¹ The 2022 index was published in February 2023, for the other indexes, comparison is sought with publications closest to 2022.





(2019, p. 33), it is possible to state that democracy is based on equality (an immutable element), with the rest being optional. According to Brown (2019, p. 33), it is political equality that guarantees that the political power exercised is authorized by the entire people and, thus, is everyone's responsibility. It is the absence of political equality (due to privilege or exclusion, for social or economic reasons, or even manipulation of the electoral system) that allows the exercise of power by (and for) part of the people, instead of the whole. In this way, democracy (government) loses the *demos*.

Thus, from what is essential to the concept (although without defining it), the political scientist presents democracy as an exercise of power in which inclusion is necessary. This is stated because exclusion, by whatever means, generates a departure from political equality. As a result, for any locality (or society) to truly be a democratic system, it is necessary that the real distances between the material conditions of individuals (whether cultural, economic-financial, social or political) do not translate into a distance between the political power of each group or each individual².

Based on this minimum criterion presented (political equality), Brown (2019, p. 34) records that democracies considered as liberal, bourgeois or capitalist have never, in fact, constituted themselves as full democracies, and whatever their democratic structure, its foundations have been weakened in recent years. While the State and capitalism serve their purposes (exercising power and generating accumulation and increase of capital, in the service of certain elite(s)), democracy is distorted by both, becoming "the weakest of the triplets at war" originating from modernity, alongside nation States and capitalism (BROWN, 2019, p. 36). For this reason, it is not possible to affirm that (true) democracy resides in the State, even in places that proclaim themselves as democratic.

Democracy thus resides in the people (*demos*). It is for this purpose (political equality) that democracy is required; hence, it is necessary to use the instrument of

² In this regard, it is possible to make a correlation between Brown's statement and the analysis of Carina Barbosa Gouvêa and Ivo Dantas regarding democracy made effective through a constitutional culture marked by democratic dialogue, since "Constitutional culture can only be built having social consensus as a basis, since it ends up defining what are the understandings and argumentation practices that guide interactions between citizens and authorities in matters of constitutional meanings [...] In this sense, it is clear that the will of the people are the foundation of government authority, where all individuals have the right to be part of the system" (GOUVÊA;DANTAS, 2019, p. 190). In the same sense, Murilo Gasparido and Cauê Ramos Andrade understand that there is an essential role of participatory institutions (such as deliberative councils) as decision-making spaces for maintaining the democratic principle (GASPARIDO; ANDRADE, 2018).





power to achieve it, or to legitimize it (rather than validate it). Contradictorily, the possibility of substantiation of democracy is found in the State.

Avoiding social exclusion – whether due to strictly sociocultural conditions or economic conditions – becomes a necessity for achieving democracy. To achieve this, it is necessary to claim political power based on this ideal of inclusion, not allowing power to be co-opted by usurpers. Brown (2019, p. 37) states that the prevalence of democracy depends on preventing markets or those that form part of them from governing, so that both need to be aligned in achieving political equality, the basis of democracy. Still, for the author, the core is the continuous efforts that democracy requires “to create a people capable of engaging in modest forms of self-rule, efforts that address the ways in which social and economic inequalities compromise the political equality” (BROWN, 2019, p. 37).

One of the efforts is the search for a place, between the individual and the political entity (State), where this democracy can (or should) be claimed. For Brown (2019, p. 38), such a place is the social one, where there is a potential meeting of citizens of considerably unequal origins and resources and where existing inequalities can be at least partially eliminated, which even requires thinking together. The reality of contemporary States and globalization finds, then, in social justice the remedy (defense or antidote) for exclusions, inequalities, stratifications that were previously depoliticized in favor of liberal privatism – such a remedy even serves as an insufficient reply to the impossibility of direct democracy. Social justice stands between the unfulfilled promise of democracy and its total abandonment, modulating capitalism against its greatest negative effects (colonialism, racism, sexism, among others). It is in the social that we jointly overcome the concepts of individuals, families, producers, investors, consumers or mere members of the nation (BROWN, 2019, p. 38).

However, the impossibility (or inherent contradiction) of a democratized capitalism arises. In this light, social justice would be, in this historical context, an attempt to strike a balance between the promises of democracy and its complete abandonment. Nevertheless, the social, more specifically in the figure of the welfare state, is seen as an enemy in neoliberal ideology.

From Brown’s perspective (2019, p. 39), neoliberalism even eliminates “democracy’s dependence on political equality”. It is the neoliberal attack on the social that generates an anti-democratic culture among the people and builds and legitimizes anti-democracy forms of state power, including the deliberate dismantling of the social





State in the name of individual freedom³. Exemplifying with the Trump administration (2016-2020) in the government of the United States of America (USA), Brown (2019, p. 40) rigorously defines the neoliberal policy of placing at the head of bodies aimed at social well-being (health, social services, education, housing, work, urban development and environment) people who act contrary to the achievement of their own ends, seeking to commercialize or destroy assets, instead of promoting their protection and adequate management:

In actually existing neoliberalism, this dismantling [of society] occurs on many fronts. Epistemologically, the dismantling of society involves the denial of its existence (...), or the rejection of concerns about inequality as the “politics of envy” (...). Politically, it involves the dismantling or privatization of the Welfare State – social security, education, parks, health and services of all types. Legally, it involves handling freedom claims to challenge equality and secularism, as well as environmental, health, safety, labor and consumer protections. Ethically, it involves challenging social justice through the natural authority of traditional values. Culturally, it implies a version of what ordoliberals called “demassification”, shoring up individuals and families against the forces of capitalism that threaten them (BROWN, 2019, p. 48-49)⁴.

Neoliberal action in all these aspects (epistemological, political, legal, ethical and cultural) aims, as stated, to dismantle the social State. To do so, the sense of democracy is emptied, but – more than that – the sense of politics is weakened. The political, beyond the State, is the place (“theater of deliberations, powers, actions and values”) “in which common existence is thought, shaped and governed. The political inescapably refers to the tracing of the coordinates of justice and order, but also security, ecology, urgencies and emergencies” (BROWN, 2019, p. 68).

Brown (2019, p. 69) also states that the political “is not autonomous in relation to other domains or powers”, being “saturated with economic, social, cultural and religious forces and values” and “singular with regard to direction of destiny.” It is in this concept of political that the concept of “people” will reside, which will protect the political equality required as the foundation of democracy. It was, however, upon this political that neoliberal thinkers imposed their distrust and aimed to limit it, contain it, distancing it from sovereignty, extirpating the democratic form and emptying its

³ There is a similarity to the Brazilian context, in relation to the SARS-COV 2 pandemic, in which part of the population demanded supposed individual freedoms against necessary scientifically based health measures.

⁴ Brown (2019, p. 49-50) explains that ordoliberals (rooted in the Freiburg School) saw capitalism as a “generator of a deindividualized and even deterritorialized social force”, making everyone think and act as a mass. Their response would then be the entrepreneurship (individualization) of workers and their reallocation in practices of family self-provision (given the depletion of social well-being).





democratic content. It is the objective of neoliberalism to constrict and dedemocratize the political, whether through technocracy, the economization and privatization of government activities, the opposition to egalitarian statism, the attempt to delegitimize democratic demands, or the attempt to restrict rights (BROWN, 2019, p. 70).

Technocracy replaced deliberation, causing decades of hostility to democratic political life, generating populations biased (or alienated) by the epistemology of neoliberalism. The politics serves the neoliberal to “loosen political control over economic actors and markets, replacing regulation and redistribution with market freedom and uncompromised property rights” (BROWN, 2019 p. 71). Although quite divergent from each other, neoliberals united against democracy and the bases that constitute it (such as social movements, democratic participation directly by the people or even through bureaucratic demands involving the State) (BROWN, p. 75).

Democracy is then emptied, reduced to a method of establishing rules. For Brown, the suffocation of democracy was fundamental to the neoliberal program, as democracy inflates the political. Neoliberalism maintains such criticism (of politics and democracy) as a defense in favor of individual freedom (BROWN, 2019, p. 76-79).

Finally, and just to demonstrate that Wendy Brown's analyzes regarding the impacts of neoliberalism on the social bases of State configuration do not represent an isolated point, it is possible to point to similar observations made by authors such as Wolfgang Streeck and Nancy Fraser.

When analyzing the correlation between capitalism and democracy, STREECK (2009) argues that the crisis of liberal democracy results, in short, from the insurgency of capital itself against the constraints that were imposed on it after the Second World War so that the (capitalist) system became politically acceptable under the conditions and systems of the States⁵. Still, according to the author, contrary to what one might think, it was not the masses who turned against post-war capitalism, but capital itself in the form of its owners, its organizations and organizers. With the arrival of neoliberalism and the project of a global market that transformed States into markets,

⁵ This new capitalist rationality (neoliberalism) “argues that it is not up to the State to correct the inequalities generated by economic dynamics, but rather to assume a role in guaranteeing the economic order resulting from market forces. As a result, the privatization of state-owned companies, the deregulation of markets, the private conception of risk replacing the idea of social protection, as well as the construction of a development project, gave way to a new rationality in which the relationship between the individual subject and it itself becomes homologous to capitalism, starting to guide conducts and creating what they call “neoliberal subjectivization”, according to which there is the generalization of competition as a form of conduct and of the company as a new model of man” (KOURY; REYMÃO; OLIVEIRA, 2021, p. 57).





there was a revitalization of the capitalist system through a “time purchase” mechanism, whose objective was to guarantee a kind of loyalty of the masses to this project of neoliberal consumerism (STREECK, 2019).

The tactic of postponing time, according to Streeck, gave a kind of survival to the capitalist system in conjunction with the democratic ideal. However, after the 2008 crisis and more recently after the Brexit referendum and the election of Donald Trump, the mechanisms for buying time were completely exhausted (STREECK, 2017), thus revealing the social abysses caused by the neoliberal project which brought extremely serious pathologies to democracies, giving rise to something that Antonio Gramsci called interregnum, a moment full of pathologies and morbidities in which “the old is dying and the new cannot be born” (GRAMSCI, 2007).

Nancy Fraser, in turn, although analyzing the impacts of the neoliberal project and the crisis of “democratic capitalism” from a hegemonic⁶ and non-economic perspective, also confirms that “progressive” neoliberalism has decimated the living standards of the middle and working classes and opened up path to an “unstable interregnum and the continuation of the political crisis” (FRASER, 2021, p. 59).

It appears, therefore, that neoliberalism as a political ideology has elevated – on unrealistic grounds – the individual (and their wills) against the collective, causing the differences (political, economic and social) between individuals to be highlighted, generating consequences in the political power of each person and each social group – thus removing the essence of democracy, “political equality”, which serves as a factor of inclusion. Added to this are the economic effects of neoliberalism (concentration of wealth, with excessive poverty or misery), as well as the practices of these effects (privatization, concealment of public goods). However, through the ideological and epistemological effort of neoliberalism, individuals (no longer “the collective”) turn

⁶ The concept of hegemony is treated by Fraser based on Gramsci's ideas in the following terms: “The indispensable ideas for this purpose come from Antonio Gramsci. Hegemony is the term he uses to explain the process by which a ruling class makes its domination appear natural by infiltrating the assumptions of its own worldview as society's common sense. Its counterpart is the hegemonic bloc: a coalition of disparate social forces that the ruling class brings together and through which it asserts its leadership. If they are to challenge these arrangements, the dominated classes must build a new and more persuasive common sense, or counter-hegemony, and a new and more powerful political alliance, or a counter-hegemonic bloc. To these Gramsci ideas, we must add one more: every hegemonic bloc incorporates a set of values and assumptions about what is fair and correct and what is not. Since at least the middle of the 20th century, in the United States and Europe, capitalist hegemony has been forged by the combination of two different aspects of law and justice – one focused on distribution, the other on recognition” (2021, p. 37-38).





against the political, against democracy itself, and not against the economic (or even against the ideological⁷).

The recognition of the democratic crisis stemming from neoliberalism, as diagnosed by Wendy Brown, demonstrates that the response must emerge from a legal-institutional containment rather than a purely political one. This containment finds its primary dogmatic foundation in the constitutional order, particularly within the context of countries situated in the capitalist periphery.

In the Brazilian case, the 1988 Constitution of the Republic, by entrenching the eradication of inequalities and the promotion of national development as fundamental objectives (Art. 3), operates as a direct normative antidote to the erosion of the social fabric driven by capitalism. It is under this dogmatic mandate for an interventionist and developmental State that the philosophical necessity of democratic inclusion is converted into the praxis of Economic Law. Consequently, to ascertain how the State's institutional design must operate to materialize substantive political equality—departing from market orthodoxy—the analysis now transitions to the theory of national development formulated by Gilberto Bercovici.

3 DEVELOPMENT THEORY FROM SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Even though the democratic crisis caused by neoliberalism (and its global imposition) is noted in almost all countries, it is always possible to verify that the consequences occur in different degrees, as well as impacting different (if not opposite) causes. This fact is in line with what Gilberto Bercovici (2005, p. 52) indicates, when he states that development is a phenomenon of historical dimension, in the sense that the problems faced by each economy (each country or region) are unique.

Unlike this thought, liberal and neoliberal theorists generalize the economic problems of their localities as if they were the world's. Hence, the idea of applying European industrialization models to countries on the periphery of capitalism, or of a chronological linearity of development – as if there were a necessary path from underdevelopment to development. It is important to emphasize that

⁷ The impact of ideologies stands out not as the conscious influence of each and every ideology, but through the unconscious influence of the hegemonic, dominant, unquestionable ideology, considered neutral by common sense.





underdevelopment is not an obligatory stage in the evolution of the economy (BERCOVICI, 2005, p. 52).

In the wake of this thought (which is linked to that of Celso Furtado), underdevelopment is a condition specific to the periphery of capitalism, as an autonomous historical process that constitutes it as a periphery in opposition to the center (Europe and the United States). As it is an inherent condition of the center-periphery relationship, overcoming underdevelopment (or moving from underdevelopment to development) is, in itself, the rupture of a process of domination, since there is necessary coexistence between center and periphery. Such a rupture, however, cannot occur without a deliberate development policy, nor without the interdependent connection of economic development and social development. Thus, to overcome underdevelopment, it is necessary to think about transforming social structures (BERCOVICI, 2005, p. 52 53).

Economic advancement in dissonance with social or productive transformations results in mere modernization – not development. Modernization allows the maintenance of underdevelopment and, therefore, worsens the concentration of income (as there was, in fact, economic growth). In this case, technical progress coming from the center of capitalism to the periphery is assimilated into the lifestyle and productivity of a small portion of the population – changing the consumption pattern (in a clear imitation of central countries) and increasing (without transforming) the productivity. This modernization, however, contributes nothing to the living conditions of the population as a whole (BERCOVICI, 2005, p. 53).

It is, therefore, possible to differentiate development from growth, with a qualitative change in development, in which it encompasses the idea of growth, but also surpasses it (BERCOVICI, 2005, p. 108). Bercovici (2005, p. 54) understands that theories of economic growth (modernization) emphasize exclusively economic concerns, ignoring “political, institutional, social or cultural conditions or consequences”. The aim is to adopt systems that replicate the theories of developed countries in underdeveloped countries, in a different socioeconomic context. The transformation of the socioeconomic structure of underdeveloped countries is the great challenge to overcoming underdevelopment.

At this point, it is necessary to highlight the robust relationship between the themes covered in this article: overcoming underdevelopment will be achieved with the social, political, and cultural participation of groups that would be the object of





development but must become the subject of this process. Democracy is, therefore, essential to development (BERCOVICI, 2005, p. 54).

In line with Brown, Bercovici (2005, p. 65) critically points out the proposal of “a neoliberal State, guided and conditioned by the market, that is, the market economy determines political and legal decisions”, also understanding that the crisis of the State “is not limited to the economism of the financial aspects of state action, but concerns society itself”. Despite this, there is also a resurgence (in the early 2000s) of the theory of national development, seeking to discuss development for its viability and its paths (BERCOVICI, 2005, p. 65) as an alternative to neoliberalism.

What stands out is the absence of social, economic and political integration as a motivator for the State's requirement for action, both to resist globalization and its effects, to control its imbalances, and to find its own way out of crises (BERCOVICI, 2005, p. 65-66). Starting from the reality of a country on the periphery of capitalism, the way out of the crisis must be combined with overcoming underdevelopment, with a national formation project, whose presence and coordination would be guided by the State – which is absent from the neoliberal government.

Based on developmental theory, overcoming underdevelopment must be done through deliberate economic policy – and not randomly. Consequently, it is imperative to know and rethink objectives and how to structure them. Focusing on the Brazilian reality, this thinking is set out in the Constitution of the Republic of 1988, which attempts to lay the foundation for a national development project. It is in the Constitution that the foundations of Brazilian development are laid out, as it is a “decisive step towards social emancipation” (BERCOVICI, 2005, p. 67-68).

The developmental theory – more than a bias – fits perfectly into the Brazilian State as intended by the Constitution of the Republic. Article 3 of the Constitution constitutes the guarantee of national development as an objective of the State. What is certain is that the objectives should not be read sparsely, but together with the others. Based on this, it is stated that national development must also include: the construction of a free, fair and supportive society, the eradication of poverty and marginalization, the reduction of regional inequalities and the promotion of the good of all (without any form of prejudice or discrimination). In this regard, it is pointed out that the Constitution is ideologically political and binds the interpreter. Constitutional principles express essential ideological options regarding the social and economic purposes of the State, and their implementation is mandatory for state bodies and





agents, or for societies (holders of economic or social power) (BERCOVICI, 2005, p. 110).

From this reading, it is stated that regional cooperation is urgent for (balanced) development, with the aim of reducing inequalities and eradicating poverty. This conjunction of principles does not allow us to consider that equality is merely between regions (whether administrative regions or federative units), but also between their inhabitants (poverty eradication). Hence why there is a need for guidance in the consolidation of these objectives by the State, which cannot – after creating mechanisms for the economies of the regions to move towards a balanced or equivalent improvement – leave the regions at the mercy of the will of the market (internal or external). Still, it is possible to guide these objectives based on Cooperative Federalism⁸:

Cooperative Federalism is in close relation with the interventionist State (the so-called Social State), which aims, among other objectives, to equalize social living conditions and reduce economic inequalities throughout the national territory (in our case, as a matter of fact, by express determination of article 3 of the Constitution...). It is precisely the Social State's demand for solidarity that led to the formulation of a principle of federal loyalty that binds the Union and the federated entities, conditioning and guiding their policies towards reducing social inequalities. However, it is not possible to standardize social living conditions among the various federated entities if they do not have sufficient capacity (not only economic, but also political) to fully satisfy all their functions. Thus, the cooperative form of federalism has as its fundamental objective the equalization of the capacity of the members of the Federation (BERCOVICI, 2005, p. 91).

Constitutional determinations are the foundation for the Brazilian State and also the basis and guideline for the entire national legal system. For this reason, it must be reinforced that the principles expressed in the Constitution of the Republic "have a mandatory nature, with imperative binding for all public authorities" (BERCOVICI, p. 105). The teleology of the State, according to Bercovici (2005, p. 106-107), or at least of the Social State, would be, precisely, to promote the integration of national society - "both at the social and federal levels, with the transformation of economic and social structures". Not taking these elements as a basis and destination is, in fact, emptying the 1988 Constitution, which "is aimed at transforming Brazilian reality" (*idem*).

⁸ For greater depth on the figure of cooperative federalism, but mainly on the legitimization and advantages of assuming the federal form of State, refer to LIZIERO, 2019.





In this sense, it is also the thought of Brown (2019, p. 34-35), referencing Sheldon Wolin: cultivating democracy implies demanding that the State acts to reduce inequalities of power among citizens. Thus, it would be possible to think about political equality, allowing political life to stop serving just the elite and serve the entire people.

The biggest problem, however, is the implementation of this constitutional destiny, which defines the Brazilian State, but which is embodied by government policies (and, mainly, by its discontinued changes with changes in government). There is no achievement of constitutional objectives, the cause of which can be found directly in the problem that is sought to eradicate – that is, social and regional inequality. According to Marcelo Neves (1996, p. 323), the Constitution "is a distant reference for state agents and citizens, whose praxis often develops outside the textual model of the Constitution".

There is no pluralistic public sphere in Brazil, as social relations are exclusionary (a problem that the Constitution aims to solve), and there cannot be citizens equally integrated into society – there is "underintegration and superintegration". In the words of Neves, "the normative action and experience of the sub-citizen and the super-citizen implode the Constitution itself as a political legal model of the public sphere", in the case of a public sphere restricted to certain social groups. What impedes the process of normative legal implementation of the Constitution would be, then, "political, economic and 'relational' blockages", whose purpose is the "maintenance of the social status quo [and the] (...) permanence of the real structures of power" (NEVES, 1996, p. 324).

The relevance of the 1988 Constitution of the Republic (and, consequently, its democratic relevance) is conditioned on the exercise of citizenship. It is possible, then, to verify the distinction in the exercise of citizenship by different social classes, as pointed out above. It is a clash between the concepts of collective (not necessarily "public") and individual. Until the mid-20th century, citizenship was thought of as a collective project, in which the State's task would be to create appropriate measures to satisfy common well-being, with a public space for discussing citizens' interests; with the strengthening of neoliberalism, there is a constant distrust of institutionalism ("large moral, social and political organizations") (NOHARA, 2012, p. 115). Public space retracted and private space expanded, "removing everything that cannot be translated by the vocabulary of private interests" (NOHARA, 2012, p. 115). It is also possible to understand that there is a serious distortion in the Constitution's concept of "efficiency",





the application of which relativizes collective participation and deliberation, in favor of a supposed efficiency (MARIANO; MAIA, 2020).

It can be noted, therefore, that there is an indissoluble relationship between the national, social or democratic problems that the Constitution of the Republic aims to solve and the relational mode of society – when economic problems such as income concentration and anti-democratic political uses for private economic purposes that impede development are focused on. The resolution that Bercovici (2005, p. 116) points to this problem is “social mobilization, through the expansion and implementation of participatory democracy”. Based on this, this article seeks to investigate the effectiveness of this resolution proposal, in comparison to other countries, comparing economic and non-economic indexes and the parameterization of such indexes according to the Democracy Index published by *The Economist*.

4 DEMOCRACY IN DATA

The reference used to parameterize this chapter of the article is the Democracy Index published, since 2006⁹, by The Economist Intelligence Unit Limited, of the British publication *The Economist*. Its parameterization will be carried out in comparison to non-economic indexes and economic indexes. Among the non-economic indexes, the following were chosen: Human Development Index (HDI), secondary school enrollment and freedom of the press. Among the economic indexes, the following were chosen: GINI Index (internal inequality), Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita, Industry share in GDP, Export share in GDP and High-tech Export in exports.

Nevertheless, before moving on to the analysis of the index and its comparisons – as well as the reasons for such comparisons –, it is necessary to criticize the reference itself. The index prepared by the British publication – although well-presented statistically and technically – is based on specific ideologies. It is a publication whose origin and headquarters are located in what has here been called

⁹ For this research, the 2021 and 2022 index publication reports were analyzed, which brought with them a result of shaking democratic confidence among the populations of several countries, resulting in a drop in the general average of the index. This fact takes into account (among other factors) the imposition of restrictions on civil liberties, which scientific consensus deemed necessary to combat the SARS COV 2 pandemic. The 2021 report confirmed the hypothesis presented in the 2020 report, at least until that moment, as the positive responses to the pandemic by the most authoritarian governments reduced confidence in democracy.





the center of capitalism (in the center-periphery duality). The concepts used in the index to parameterize democracy are, therefore, based on the epistemology and economic-social realities of Europe and the USA.

In the body of the index report, there is even a safeguard that the index assesses what is commonly called "liberal democracy"¹⁰. However, the reservation made in this introduction occurs precisely to protect the potential of the term democracy beyond the bias and epistemology treated in the index¹¹.

Despite the critical view that is due to the index used now, it is possible to make instrumental use of its results. The democratic index, in addition to clearly presenting the method by which it arrived at its results, has a significant quantitative scope. The recurrence of publication (which allows continuous timeline measurement), its accessibility and wide dissemination are also factors that enable its use as a reference to other indexes.

The report on the publication of the democratic index makes reservations regarding the difficulty of defining the concept of democracy. To this end, the following (apparently) objective criteria are used: electoral process and pluralism; civil liberties; government functioning; political participation; and political culture. For this article, whose objective is to verify the relationship between development and democracy, especially based on the binomial economic development and social development, the democratic index becomes extremely relevant as it considers political participation as a "necessary component, as well as apathy and abstention are enemies of democracy" (THE ECONOMIST INTELLIGENCE UNIT, 2021, p. 56), but, mainly, because it does not consider (in the calculation of the index) levels of economic well-being or social well-being.

In this way, it will be possible to analyze a statistical (although criticizable) measure of democracy, with the economic and social (non-economic) statistics mentioned. To this end, the top thirty (30) countries in the democratic index were elected, in comparison to Brazil (which occupies the forty-ninth place in the index). The

¹⁰ It is worth remembering what Wendy Brown stated and highlighted at the beginning of this article: liberal democracies were never full democracies.

¹¹ That is, it is possible to make an epistemological critique of democracy and the human rights it protects, when handling theories from anthropology, philosophy, history and sociology. It is necessary to remember that liberal democracy, so protected in the discourse of International Law and its organizing apparatus, was imposed as the only viable category on most countries around the world, in a certain relationship of dominance or domination. This is the case of the colonization of the Americas and the African continent, the occupations and colonization in Asian countries and, more recently, the tutelage that is imposed militarily on countries in the Middle East.





following sequence is thus formed: Norway – 1st; New Zealand – 2nd; Iceland – 3rd; Sweden – 4th; Finland – 5th; Denmark – 6th; Switzerland – 7th; Ireland – 8th; Netherlands – 9th; Taiwan – 10th; Uruguay – 11th; Canada – 12th; Luxembourg – 13th; Germany – 14th; Australia – 15th; Japan – 16th; Costa Rica – 17th; United Kingdom – 18th; Chile – 19th; Austria – 20th; Mauritius – 21st; France – 22nd; Spain – 22nd; South Korea – 24th; Czechia – 25th; Greece – 25th; Estonia – 27th; Portugal – 28th; Israel – 29th; United States – 30th; Brazil – 51st. In the 2024 democratic index, the first twenty-four countries at the beginning of the ranking are considered as "full democracy", with the twenty-fifth (Czechia and Greece) to the seventy-second (North Macedonia) considered as of "flawed democracy"¹², where Brazil is located. The distinction between these two terms is not minimal. Countries considered to have complete democracy would present an environment that provides the basis for a political culture that leads to the "flourishing of democracy", as well as having satisfactory governmental functioning and having limited problems in the functioning of democracy. In turn, countries considered to have imperfect democracy have small problems with violations of press freedom in relation to the electoral process, as well as significant weaknesses in other aspects of democracy, including governance problems, poorly developed political culture and low levels of political participation.

The comparison intended to be made in this article, therefore, may establish a relationship between these democratic categories (which, from the perspective and limits of the democratic index, lend themselves to the definition of some type of democracy) and non-economic indexes (social or otherwise), as well as in relation to economic indexes. Such comparisons aim to bring together or distance the importance of social indicators and economic indicators from democratic ones.

This highlights the methodological importance of relying on a democratic index that expressly excludes economic and social variables from its core calculation. To illustrate the relationship between these dimensions, Table 1 compares the Democracy Index rankings with selected non-economic indicators:

Table 1. Comparison of the Democracy Index with non-economic indexes

Index (ranking) Country	Democracy Index	HDI	Secondary school enrollment	Freedom of press
Norway	1	2	19	1
New Zealand	2	13	11	11

¹² In addition to these classifications, there are also "hybrid regimes" and "authoritarian regimes".





Iceland	3	3	38	15
Sweden	4	7	4	3
Finland	5	11	15	5
Denmark	6	6	40	2
Switzerland	7	1	62	14
Ireland	8	8	5	6
Netherland	9	10	31	28
Taiwan	10	*	*	38
Uruguay	11	58	54	44
Canada	12	15	2	19
Luxembourg	13	17	69	21
Germany	14	9	63	16
Australia	15	5	36	39
Japan	16	19	*	71
Costa Rica	17	58	73	8
United Kingdom ¹³	18	18	9	24
Chile	19	42	52	82
Austria	20	25	58	39
Mauritius	21	63	67	64
France	22	28	22	26
Spain	22	27	10	32
South Korea	24	19	8	43
Czechia	25	32	44	20
Greece	25	33	30	108
Estonia	27	31	25	4
Portugal	28	38	23	7
Israel	29	22	6	86
United States	30	21	34	42
Brazil	51	87	74	110

Table prepared by the authors. Sources: United Nations, World Bank and Reporters Without Borders.

There is a proximity to the reality indicated in the ranking made from the democratic index and those made from the other indexes - with the closest indexes being the HDI and the Press Freedom index¹⁴, with the exception of deviations from Uruguay, Costa Rica and Mauritius for the HDI, and Chile, Mauritius, Japan, Israel and Greece for Press Freedom (still, in both cases, Brazil is below all selected countries). The ranking based on the number of enrollments in secondary school (intending to measure education) showed more deviations than proximity.

In relation to the national comparison, it is possible to note that Brazil was far below the related countries (mainly, the HDI) and, consequently, considerably distant from the average of these countries.

¹³ While the United Kingdom is represented as a State in the Democracy Index, for the press freedom ranking, Great Britain is considered, with no indication of the ranking for Northern Ireland.

¹⁴ Elaborated by Reporters Without Borders.





When analyzing the selected economic indexes, it is possible to present the following table:

Table 1. Comparison of *Democracy Index* with economic indexes

Index (ranking) Country	<i>Democracy Index</i>	GINI	GDP <i>per capita</i>	Industry share in GDP	Export in GDP	High-tech export in exports	Unemployment	Underemployment
Norway	1	13	7	33	75	92	24	11
New Zealand	2	85	27	128	142	61	15	50
Iceland	3	9	13	129	88	103	27	28
Sweden	4	23	16	108	60	16	72	16
Finland	5	13	20	95	83	4	63	34
Denmark	6	13	14	139	36	112	42	12
Switzerland	7	23	6	96	25	53	5	29
Ireland	8	31	5	26	6	2	37	37
Netherlands	9	22	18	147	15	27	19	51
Taiwan	10	57	*	*	*	*	*	*
Uruguay	11	113	68	140	105	29	75	83
Canada	12	56	23	94	109	36	44	43
Luxembourg	13	61	3	183	1	119	40	14
Germany	14	40	25	76	55	45	10	13
Australia	15	63	17	85	144	83	21	41
Japan	16	51	35	63	154	19	8	26
Costa Rica	17	154	78	127	91	75	96	78
United Kingdom	18	73	28	149	123	46	23	54
Chile	19	140	70	53	102	107	76	76
Austria	20	29	21	83	42	68	32	22
Mauritius	21	87	94	144	64	78	73	59
France	22	44	32	158	118	62	69	25
Spain	22	63	44	130	95	71	98	44
South Korea	24	38	39	48	73	75	11	65
Czechia	25	5	50	59	21	40	7	56
Greece	25	54	60	162	78	150	97	82
Estonia	27	34	48	107	19	35	58	19
Portugal	28	49	52	135	74	95	53	48
Israel	29	103	22	151	117	7	24	27
United States	30	122	11	148	172	50	22	10
Brazil	51	152	100	141	150	28	85	88

Table prepared by the authors. Sources: World Bank, CIA (USA Government), IMF.

It appears that the chosen economic indicators have less direct relationship (greater distance) with the ranking of the democratic index than the non-economic indicators. However, it is still possible to maintain a close relationship between the GINI index and GDP per capita, which measure, respectively, the inequality of a country's internal family income and national production per inhabitant in a given year. In other words, these are (among the chosen economic indicators) indexes that aim to indicate some measure of equality or inequality. In both cases, Brazil is once again below all the countries referenced by the democratic index in this article. It is also possible to



notice a pattern for the GINI index. The approach to the democratic index followed almost the same as the non-economic indicators, with the exception of the countries of Latin America, the USA, New Zealand and Israel – which therefore point to greater internal inequality¹⁵.

The choice of the other economic indicators was not due to a measure of “political equality” highlighted at the beginning of the article, but in line with the developmental theory, discussed in the second section. Theorists who approach developmentalism from the perspective of the 21st century place it as the conjunction of the State with the market, with a State concerned with promoting economic development, from a macroeconomic perspective – ensuring an economic environment favorable to this. Industrial policy is thus pointed out as a necessary act for the State to enable productive sophistication, especially in underdeveloped countries. Among the facts of such State policies, one could mention the intervention to correct market failures, export orientation (of sophisticated products, that is, high technology and with greater added value) and the search for more competition from domestic companies abroad (CARVALHO; GALA, 2020, p. 139 143).

In this current of thought, the State has always been (and continues to be) a central part of the technological development of rich countries. The ability to mobilize resources (via the public budget, development banks and forced savings) makes the State capable of facing the risks of failure that basic research in technological innovation (state of the art in each field of knowledge) inherently brings with it. Innovations are used in the private sector after the phase in which they only generate expenses (no financial return). Industrial policy, wishing to promote innovation and competitiveness, will be successful with adequate coordination between the State, market and civil society. Without coordinated action, both resources and human skills will be misused (CARVALHO; GALA, 2020, p. 142 146).

For this reason, the indexes of industry participation in GDP, export participation in GDP and, mainly, high technology exports in GDP were chosen. It can be seen that, for such indexes, a considerable part of the referenced countries ranked below Brazil. However, Brazil is still very far from the centrality (average and median) of the countries referenced by the democratic index – with the exception of high technology exports, in which it is very close to the average and close to the median.

¹⁵ Although extremely relevant, delving into this subject requires a specific project and is not compatible with this article.





Regarding the ranking created by the unemployment rate, it is important to highlight two factors (in addition to only Spain having a lower ranking than Brazil): (a) up to the seventy-seventh position (represented in the table by Luxembourg), the unemployment rate is only 5% (five percent) of the population; (b) it appears that some countries that maintain a considerable unemployment rate, such as France (8%), manage to maintain good (if not excellent) performances (although numerical) in relation to development (HDI) and inequality (GINI and GDP per capita).

From this, it can be stated that the degree of democracy (in the case of liberal democracy) of countries is close to their degrees of development and social inequality, with the relationship being less close (or less relevant) with economic factors that disregard the inequality. Having the theory of development (developmentalism) as the existent relationship between economic development and social development, it is certain that democracy, considered as a principle of inclusion, is an essential factor for the development of a country (whether as a cause or as a consequence).

5 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

It is claimed that there is a direct (essential) relationship between development and democracy. However, it is not possible to conclude that the high level of democracy (by the standards presented) represents an impact on a high level of development, or whether it is the high level of development that generates an impact on the democratic level. That is, it is not possible to say that one is the cause and the other is the consequence – and both can occupy both positions.

As presented by Gilberto Bercovici's reading, when contrasting development and modernization, it remains certain – based on the concrete analysis of the data presented in the chosen indexes – that economic development cannot occur solely with the increase in financial qualities and technologies. There needs to be a social bias (or social development) so that we can talk about development and not mere modernization.

The social bias necessary for development can be found in the government regime itself valued by countries that focus on development (as a Westernized precept, which uses the center-periphery dichotomy) – democracy. To this end, it is necessary





to treat democracy as a necessarily inclusive mechanism, as dictated by its ideal of political equality – even if we want to maintain liberal democracy as a method.

To achieve development, it is necessary to treat social (or democratic) issues with the same level of importance as economic issues, if not with greater relevance. Ultimately, it is essential that state and government policies, whose authors aim at economic development, attribute essentiality to democracy.

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