

SOSIAL BƏRABƏRLİK VƏ DAVAMLI İQTİSADI İNKİŞAFIN KƏSİŞMƏSİ

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XÜLASƏ

Sosial bərabərlik və davamlı iqtisadi inkişafın kəsişməsi müasir cəmiyyətlər üçün əsas problem və fürsətdir. Bu məqalə iqtisadi artımın ədalətlik və inklüzivlik ilə tarazlaşdırılmasının kritik ehtiyacını araşdırır, davamlı inkişafın icmalar daxilində və arasında mövcud olan bərabərsizlikləri aradan qaldırmadan tam həyata keçirilə bilməyəcəyini vurğulayır. Məşğulluq, təhsil, yaşayış yeri, səhiyyə və ekoloji ədalət kimi əsas sahələri araşdıraraq, məqalə integrasiya edilmiş siyasətlərin həm iqtisadi davamlılığı, həm də sosial bərabərliyi necə təşviq edə biləcəyini vurğulayır. Nümunəvi araşdırmalar və siyasət tövsiyələri vasitəsilə bütün fərdlərin və icmaların inkişaf səylərindən faydalanmasını təmin edən inklüziv inkişaf strategiyalarının əhəmiyyətini vurğulayır. Nəhayət, məqalə iddia edir ki, həqiqətən də davamlı iqtisadiyyat sosial bərabərliyin sonradan düşünülməmiş, həm indiki, həm də gələcək nəsillərin ehtiyaclarına cavab verən möhkəm, inkişaf edən cəmiyyətlər yaratmaq üçün vacib olan fundamental prinsip olduğu bir iqtisadiyyatdır.

Açar sözlər: iqtisadi inkişaf, davamlılıq, sosial bərabərlik, sosial ədalət, iqtisadi artım, siyasət.

THE INTERSECTION OF SOCIAL EQUITY AND SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

The intersection of social equity and sustainable economic development represents a pivotal challenge and opportunity for contemporary societies.

This article explores the critical need to balance economic growth with fairness and inclusivity, emphasizing that sustainable development cannot be fully realized without addressing the disparities that exist within and between communities. By examining key areas such as employment, education, housing, healthcare, and environmental justice, the article highlights how integrated policies can promote both economic sustainability and social equity. Through case studies and policy recommendations, it underscores the importance of inclusive growth strategies that ensure all individuals and communities benefit from development efforts. Ultimately, the article argues that a truly sustainable economy is one where social equity is not an afterthought but a fundamental principle, essential for creating resilient, thriving societies that meet the needs of both present and future generations.

Key Words: economic development, sustainability, social equity, social justice, economic growth, policy

ПЕРЕСЕЧЕНИЕ СОЦИАЛЬНОЙ СПРАВЕДЛИВОСТИ И УСТОЙЧИВОГО ЭКОНОМИЧЕСКОГО РАЗВИТИЯ

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РЕЗЮМЕ

Пересечение социальной справедливости и устойчивого экономического развития представляет собой как вызов, так и возможность для современных обществ. В данной статье исследуется критическая необходимость сбалансировать экономический рост с обеспечением справедливости и инклюзивности, подчеркивая, что устойчивое развитие невозможно полностью реализовать без учета существующих внутри и между сообществами неравенств. Рассматривая ключевые области, такие как занятость, образование, жилье, здравоохранение и экологическая справедливость, статья демонстрирует, как интегрированные политики могут способствовать как экономической устойчивости, так и социальной справедливости.

Через анализ примеров и разработку рекомендаций по политике подчеркивается важность стратегий инклюзивного роста, которые обеспечивают, что все люди и сообщества извлекают пользу из усилий по развитию. В конечном итоге, статья утверждает, что по-настоящему устойчивая экономика — это та, в которой социальная справедливость является не второстепенным, а фундаментальным принципом, необходимым для создания устойчивых, процветающих обществ, удовлетворяющих потребности как настоящих, так и будущих поколений.

Ключевые слова: экономическое развитие, устойчивость, социальная справедливость, социальная справедливость, экономический рост, политика.

INTRODUCTION

The pursuit of sustainable economic development has become a global imperative, driven by the need to balance economic growth with environmental stewardship and social well-being. However, one crucial element that often remains underemphasized in these discussions is social equity. Social equity refers to the fair and just distribution of resources, opportunities, and privileges across all segments of society, ensuring that every individual, regardless of their background or circumstances, has the opportunity to thrive.

The intersection of social equity and sustainable economic development is not merely a convergence of ideals but a necessary alignment for achieving long-term prosperity. Economic growth that leaves behind marginalized communities or exacerbates existing inequalities cannot be considered truly sustainable. Without addressing social equity, efforts to promote sustainability risk perpetuating cycles of poverty, exclusion, and environmental degradation.

1. SOLIDARITY AND SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

In today's world, the need for interaction and cooperation is increasingly felt, with solidarity becoming a key factor in achieving sustainable development

in social and economic spheres. Solidarology is viewed as a process of cooperation and joint ownership of resources, based on mutual assistance and support among people within economic systems. The concept of solidarity encompasses categories such as social justice, equal opportunities, responsibility to society and the environment, and more. Sustainable socio-economic development, in connection with solidarity, can be based on the principles of preserving and developing human capital, strengthening social solidarity, and the resilience of the economic system. It involves analyzing issues related to justice and social inequalities and exploring opportunities for deepening solidarity relations within society (Sharafullina, 2023: 17).

In the context of sustainable socio-economic development, solidarology plays a mandatory role in fostering the creation of equal opportunities for all members of society, regardless of their status, age, gender, or background. It is important to ensure access to education, healthcare, social protection, and other fundamental rights and services for the entire population. Additionally, solidarology involves the support of various forms of social entrepreneurship and social innovations, which contribute to job creation, the development of local communities, and the improvement of the living standards and quality of life of the population.

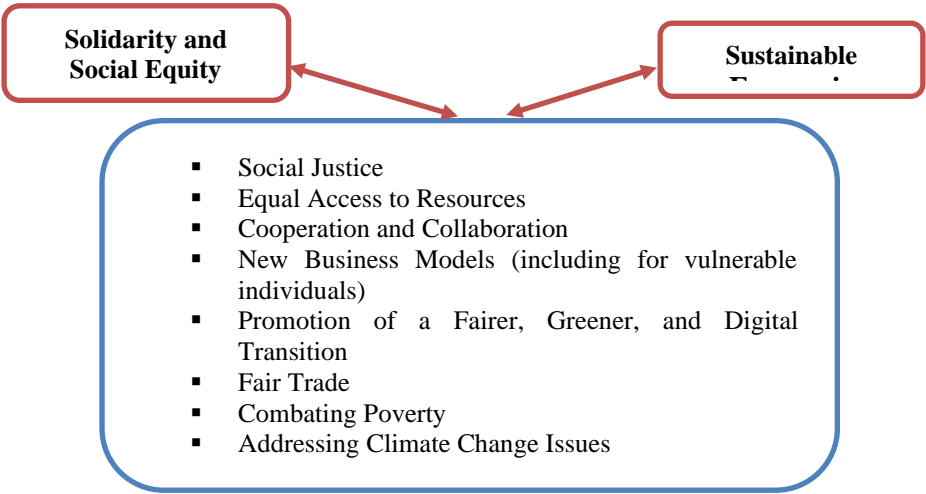
There are several aspects of solidarity. First and foremost, attention can be drawn to the role of solidarity in shaping a stable and just social policy. The state and society can jointly develop programs and measures based on solidarity to improve living conditions for all citizens. Secondly, an interesting aspect is the interaction between solidarology and economic development. Solidarity can stimulate cooperation in the business sector and contribute to the implementation of innovations that have a positive impact on society and the economy as a whole.

Solidarology places special emphasis on issues of social justice, analyzing inequalities in access to resources, education, healthcare, and other social benefits. Undoubtedly, sustainable development is impossible without considering the interests and needs of all members of society. Solidarity-based relationships contribute to the creation of mechanisms aimed at reducing the gap between rich and poor, which promotes more sustainable economic growth. This can be achieved through cooperative enterprises, fair trade, microfinancing, and other tools. Such forms of economic solidarity help create equal opportunities for all market participants and reduce

economic instability. Within the framework of solidarology, education and awareness are viewed as means to achieve sustainable development. The more people are informed about the issues and challenges facing society, the more likely they are to engage in finding solutions, thereby fostering civic engagement and responsibility (Barlybayev, 2016: 178). International solidarity plays an important role in addressing global issues such as poverty, climate change, and the fight against infectious diseases. Cooperation and support between countries and nations are key aspects of sustainable development. Solidarology allows for the study of these issues within the context of national and global challenges, which require joint efforts and resources to ensure effective solutions (Figure 1).

Figure 1.

Interaction between Solidarity, Social Equity and Sustainable Economic Development



Source: Author’s own calculation based on the literature review

The United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on Social and Solidarity Economy (UNTFSSSE) was established in 2013 to raise awareness of the social and solidarity economy (SSE) within international academic and policy circles. The task force brings together UN agencies and other intergovernmental organizations, as well as associations of SSE networks as

members and observers. The activities of the Task Force include organizing events within the UN and other international conferences, meeting with policymakers, preparing and disseminating publications, and participating in joint projects involving UNTFSSSE members and observers. Since the turn of the century, SSE-related legislation has been adopted in at least 20 countries. On April 18, 2023, during its 66th plenary session, the United Nations General Assembly officially adopted a resolution titled *"Promoting the Social and Solidarity Economy for Sustainable Development."* This resolution is significant because it not only establishes an official definition of the social and solidarity economy but also recognizes its potential in contributing to the achievement and localization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Galimova & Sharafullina, 2019: 52).

Agents of the SSE are institutional units that adhere to the values and principles of the SSE. The set of values that distinguish the SSE from other types of economies, as reflected in national and subnational legislation, includes the following categories: holistic human development, meeting societal needs, cultural diversity, environmental awareness, and sustainability; social justice, equality, equity, integrity, and non-discrimination; solidarity, mutual assistance, cooperation, social cohesion, and social integration; transparency, honesty, trust, shared responsibility; self-regulation, freedom, democracy, and subsidiarity (Utting et al, 2014).

Thus, solidarology plays an important role in the context of sustainable socio-economic development. It emphasizes the significance of social justice, economic solidarity, international cooperation, and education. The social economy and solidarity economy can play a crucial role in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by promoting inclusive and sustainable development. Applying the principles of solidarology will enable society to move toward a sustainable economy of the future, where every individual has equal opportunities and access to resources, and global challenges are viewed as common issues that require collective efforts.

2. THE SOCIAL PRINCIPLES (IMPERATIVES) OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Alongside the concepts of "driving forces" and "drivers," some researchers use the term "imperatives" of sustainable development, primarily in relation

to its environmental component. The concept of the "environmental imperative" was introduced in the mid-1980s by Academician N. N. Moiseev. He defined the environmental imperative as a system of constraints, the violation of which could lead to irreversible consequences for the continued existence of both humanity and the entire natural world (Moiseyev, 1988: 78). The introduction of this term sparked a broad discussion among representatives of various scientific fields, including philosophy, ethics, economics, and ecology. As a result of this discussion, several approaches to understanding its content emerged. A common understanding of the environmental imperative is that it represents a system of constraints and requirements, adherence to which is an essential condition for sustainable development. This includes transforming the environment in accordance with its adaptive capacities, refraining from any actions that could undermine the lives of future generations, and recognizing the degree of responsibility to descendants when making decisions related to health and environmental conditions.

The introduction of the concept of "social imperatives of sustainable development" into scientific discourse is justified by the multitude of factors and the ambiguous nature of their impact on the sustainable development process. This concept refers to phenomena, processes, and emerging social trends that, on the one hand, necessitate the transition to sustainable development (i.e., it concerns emerging requirements and constraints), and on the other hand, enable the realization of its fundamental principles (the driving forces of sustainable development). The term "social imperatives" should be understood as a general concept that reflects the idea of a large number of factors, requirements, and constraints that define sustainable development, possessing both social (social problems and changes, emerging social risks and trends, social institutions) and fundamental (i.e., universal, long-term) characteristics.

The first group of social factors, which reflect emerging requirements and constraints and define the necessity for implementing the principles of sustainable development, primarily includes social challenges and risks. These encompass demographic risks, such as the projected decline in the growth rate of the working-age population to zero by 2030 and the aging population; employment-related risks, including the anticipated mass displacement of workers due to the adoption of modern technologies and the

spread of precarious and unstable forms of employment; and the risks of increasing income inequality (both within and between countries), as well as the growth of material and social inequality. Additionally, there are risks associated with increasing inter-country inequality in the capacity to reproduce and enhance the quality of human capital, which could lead to a decline in its quality, social and political instability, and an increase in economic migration. The intensification of migration flows to the most socio-economically prosperous European countries will inevitably reduce the ability of national governments not only to increase social spending but also to allocate resources for the development of the social sphere and to address the social issues of their citizens, thereby shaping effective social policies. If this problem becomes long-term, even the most prosperous countries will face reduced capacities to reproduce and enhance the quality of their human capital; in the worst-case scenario, they may encounter social default.

The second group of factors includes social changes and emerging social trends that act as driving forces or social drivers of sustainable development. It is clear that within the scope of a single article, it is not possible to cover the full diversity of social changes and trends that make the realization of sustainable development principles possible. Based on the interpretation of social imperatives of sustainable development proposed in this work, the criteria for their identification, and the assessment of the role of certain processes and phenomena in ensuring sustainable development, we consider the following as key social drivers:

- The formation of socially responsible thinking among economic actors (including the state, business organizations, households, and individuals), along with the establishment of value systems relevant to the goals and principles of sustainable development.
- The institutionalization of corporate social responsibility (CSR) and the expansion of the number of business organizations that follow the principles of CSR and sustainable development in their activities.
- The development of the phenomenon of responsible (sustainable) consumption.
- The transition to a new model of social policy.

- The increased role of universities and business schools in shaping socially responsible thinking, promoting the principles of social responsibility and sustainable development, and teaching responsible management.

It is important to note that the proposed list of processes and phenomena capable of acting as social drivers of sustainable development represents a system of interconnected changes. These changes reflect the process of increasing social responsibility among all participants in economic activity, including the state, businesses, citizens, and society as a whole.

Unlike economic thinking, socially responsible thinking must be based on the principle of mutual (solidary) responsibility. The implementation of this principle requires an increase in the responsibility of all economic actors (the state, businesses, and households) for the decisions they make and the outcomes of their activities. It also entails responsible management, engagement with (and consideration of) the needs of stakeholders, and the formation of a different value system. Adhering to this principle encourages economic actors to think in terms of economic, social, and environmental responsibility, social investments, and socially responsible consumption and investment, as well as in terms of shared values and sustainable development. In this approach, the decisions, choices, and actions of economic actors can be deemed rational if they do not contradict the demands of a broad range of stakeholders, align with shared values, and contribute to achieving not only economic but also social and environmental effects. Socially responsible thinking also involves a rejection of the value-neutral concept of efficiency, where the ethical, environmental, and social criteria of efficiency and outcomes are not considered in the evaluation of a company's effectiveness. Instead, it calls for a value-oriented concept of efficiency. Proponents of this latter approach argue that the assessment of effectiveness should be based on a broader set of criteria, such as meeting the needs of stakeholders, increasing their well-being, creating shared values, expanding opportunities to achieve sustainable development goals, and minimizing negative external effects. Prominent American entrepreneurs and authors of the book "Conscious Capitalism" reflect on the need to rethink business goals. They believe that the assertion that profit maximization is the sole possible goal of a business organization has caused significant damage to the reputation of business. The goals of

entrepreneurial activity should involve creating shared values and improving people's lives, with profit being merely a means to achieve these goals (Makki & Sisodia, 2015: 40).

Corporate social responsibility (CSR), as a socio-economic institution, possesses all the distinguishing features and attributes of an institution, among which the presence of specific functions is particularly important. Analyzing these functions helps to reveal the role of this institution in ensuring sustainable development. Key functions of CSR include (Fatima & Elbanna, 2023: 109):

Formation of Value Systems: Developing a system of values, principles, rules, requirements, and restrictions that companies should follow in their activities, along with a model of behavior for business organizations that aligns with the principles of social responsibility and sustainable development, as well as the corresponding mechanism for business-society interaction.

Regulation of Economic Agent Behavior: Coordinating the interactions of economic agents, aligning corporate strategies with the demands of stakeholders and societal interests.

Redistribution of Benefits and Costs: Implementing certain restrictions that may limit companies' opportunities and increase the costs associated with socially irresponsible behavior. On the other hand, these restrictions necessitate the reallocation of resources toward innovation, where the benefits of innovation can potentially offset the losses from these restrictions.

Increasing Predictability: Enhancing the predictability of the behavior of economic actors and stakeholders.

Reducing Risks: Contributing to the reduction of economic, environmental, and social risks.

Balancing Interests: Ensuring a balance between the interests of the company and its stakeholders, between the short-term interests of the company and the long-term interests of society, and between the economic, environmental, and social aspects of the company's activities.

Improving Human and Social Capital: Contributing to the enhancement of the quality of human and social capital.

It is evident that these functions contribute to the implementation of key principles of sustainable development—namely, the principles of

reproducibility, balance, and inclusiveness. These principles are achieved through the integration of CSR into the core activities of companies, particularly within the framework of the strategic CSR model. This involves the development and implementation of social and environmental corporate policies, the formulation of corporate strategies that consider the identified demands of stakeholders and emerging social trends, and the engagement of a wide range of stakeholders in corporate social activities. The nominal carriers of the CSR institution include business organizations (corporations, medium and small businesses), professional and industry associations of managers and entrepreneurs, and non-profit organizations. Despite the growing number of companies positioning themselves as socially responsible, in reality, only a small portion of business organizations in Russia currently serve as actual carriers of the CSR institution. Primarily, these are large companies with international participation.

It is evident that the process of CSR institutionalization is not yet complete, which allows this socio-economic institution to be characterized as emerging. The main indicators of the completion of this process should include: the development of a system of generally accepted corporate norms and values based on CSR principles; the increased role of companies as a social institution; and the consolidation of relevant CSR norms and constraints in the consciousness, practical activities, policies, and strategies of companies, leading to their sustainability.

One of the key conditions for implementing the principles of sustainable development (SD) and achieving its goals is the recognition that the transition to sustainable development is an objective process driven by numerous factors, a response to economic, environmental, and social challenges and risks emerging at both global and national levels. Acknowledging the objective necessity of increasing the social responsibility of economic actors, transitioning to sustainable development, and consequently, the inevitable revision of fundamental principles of consumption, business practices, and management, underscores the importance of conveying the ideas and principles of sustainable development to the widest possible audience at all levels of the education system. Special attention should be given to target audiences such as students enrolled in higher professional education (HPE) programs in economics and management. In this context, the enhanced role of

universities and business schools in shaping socially responsible thinking, promoting the principles of CSR and sustainable development, and teaching responsible management should be viewed as one of the key drivers of sustainable development.

CONCLUSION

The transition to sustainable development is an objective process driven by a multitude of factors and is a response to the economic, environmental, and social challenges emerging at both global and national levels. This transition necessitates a fundamental revision of consumption patterns, business practices, and management principles, highlighting the importance of promoting the ideas and principles of sustainable development to the broadest possible audience, particularly within the education system. The role of universities and business schools in shaping socially responsible thinking, promoting CSR principles, and teaching responsible management is crucial. These institutions serve as key drivers of sustainable development by fostering a new generation of leaders who are equipped to navigate the complex interplay of economic, social, and environmental responsibilities. Moreover, the principles of solidarology underscore the significance of social justice, economic solidarity, and international cooperation as foundational elements of sustainable development. Solidarology provides a framework for understanding the critical role of solidarity in shaping just social policies, stimulating economic development, and addressing global challenges such as poverty, climate change, and public health crises. By applying these principles, society can progress toward a sustainable future where every individual has equal opportunities and access to resources, and where global challenges are addressed through collective efforts.

The ongoing discussions surrounding the "social imperatives of sustainable development" further emphasize the need for a holistic approach that incorporates both social and environmental imperatives. As social changes and emerging trends act as driving forces of sustainable development, the adoption of socially responsible thinking, the institutionalization of CSR, and the promotion of responsible consumption and management practices are essential. These efforts contribute to the realization of sustainable development goals by ensuring that economic growth is aligned with the

broadier objectives of social equity and environmental stewardship. Ultimately, the successful integration of CSR and the principles of sustainable development across all levels of society and business will be crucial in addressing the pressing challenges of our time, ensuring a resilient, equitable, and prosperous future for all.

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