

Chapter 5

Equality as an ingredient for a post-growth world

Olivier De Schutter, Kate Pickett and Richard Wilkinson

1. Social justice within planetary boundaries: the conventional narrative

Even more than the Great Financial Crisis of 2009–2011, the Covid-19 pandemic has forced upon us an exercise in imagination. It has triggered a search for new development models that would allow, not a return to the pre-crisis situation, but instead the construction of societies built anew: societies that improve the well-being of people *and* are resilient and sustainable, to slow down or reverse the gradual erosion of the ecosystems on which we depend. This is how debates on how to ‘build back better’ or on the content of the New Social Contract’ called for by UN Secretary-General António Guterres have been cast. These debates typically focus on where to strike the right balance between poverty reduction, on one hand, and how to change our production and consumption patterns, on the other, in order to remain within what scientists call the ‘planetary boundaries’. The challenge, as popularised in particular by the ‘Doughnut Economics’ framework developed by Kate Raworth (Raworth 2017), would be to remain within the ‘safe and just space for humanity’ that she defines, ensuring that all have access to a range of goods and services needed to lead a decent life, while at the same time shifting to lifestyles that limit resource use and the production of waste and pollution.

Framing the challenge as a *compromise* has become dominant: it is the conventional wisdom of the times. Poverty eradication and environmental sustainability are the two major components of the Sustainable Development Goals adopted to guide the efforts of the international community for the period 2015–2030. The assumption is that, while both objectives are desirable, they compete with one another, so that we would need to accept a kind of ‘mutual sacrifice’ of each: the fuller the range of capabilities provided to individuals, the higher the risk that we will continue to cross certain environmental thresholds. Thus the political debate must focus on how much of each objective we should aim to achieve. Hence the need to strike the right balance between them. The challenge would be to define a sort of ‘optimum’ or ‘sweet-spot’ position that would minimise the trade-offs to the fullest extent possible.

This framing of the debate is based on three interrelated assumptions. The first is that poverty is to be conceptualised as a lack of wealth or income, depriving poor households of access to the goods and services necessary to lead a decent life. The second assumption is that the ecological transformation of our production and consumption models will require important investments – for instance, in renewable energies, public transport or the retrofitting of buildings – so that the more we focus on realising social justice,

by funding public services and social protection, the less we would be able to move towards low-carbon societies and end the erosion of biodiversity, because the available ‘fiscal space’ cannot be expanded infinitely. The third assumption, finally and critically, is that economic growth – increasing monetary wealth or GDP – is essential for both poverty reduction and ecological transformation. In other words, it is by growing the size of the pie that the state would be able to support low-income households, combining progressive taxation with social policies, and to make the necessary investments for an environmentally sustainable future.

But are these assumptions correct? In what follows, we explain why we think they are not. We seek both to challenge the dominant framing and to propose an alternative view. We argue that, far from competing with one another, the objectives of social justice and ecological transformation are mutually supportive. The apparent conflict betrays a naïve viewpoint, which fails to understand how, by making the right choices – including the right investment choices – we can pursue both objectives at the same time. We also believe that the reliance on growth, which in the dominant narrative always functions as a way to alleviate the apparent tension between social justice and ecological transformation (by providing the fiscal space necessary to make green investments and achieve social justice at the same time), is problematic in its own right, and that we need to identify other avenues that can fulfil both objectives.

2. Reframing the challenge

While ecological transformation and social justice are often presented as competing with one another, the apparent tension between the two is in fact the result of a lack of vision, both in how we conceive the fight against poverty or social exclusion, and in how we define the ecological transformation. As long as we see the former essentially as taking the form of a tax-and-transfer system in which wealth is created in order to be redistributed to support the lowest earners in society, and regard the latter as requiring environmental policies to compensate for the transformation of the world into a resource to exploit, the tension will remain real. This is not only because both objectives require significant investments, but also because the resources available are not infinite. It is also because those very investments, in order to be paid for, require monetary wealth to grow, even though the quest for growth fosters an extractive economy at great cost of human health and well-being. This cannot easily be reconciled with either social justice or environmental sustainability, let alone with a combination of the two.

Social justice, however, is not solely about compensating those who are unable to make a decent income by themselves, as waged or self-employed workers. It can also be about building an inclusive economy, one that provides employment opportunities for all those seeking to work and encourages investments supporting relatively labour-intensive production processes, combined with working time reductions to ensure a fair distribution of work across the active population. And the ecological transformation is not only about costly investments to accelerate the shift to renewable energy sources and better public transport infrastructures, or to improve the energy performance of buildings. It is also about changing the regulatory framework and reforming taxation.

For instance, the introduction of a carbon tax – ideally in the form of a sliding scale for domestic energy prices so households consuming less pay lower prices than those consuming more – and the phasing out of fossil fuel subsidies can be combined with support to low-income households to allow them to pay their energy bills. This would accelerate the shift to renewables in a way that is fiscally neutral. Furthermore, land use planning can try to reduce the distance between domicile and places of employment and education and therefore the need for motorised transport, while at the same time preventing the spatial segregation of the socially disadvantaged. Encouraging a shift to low-input (agroecological) farming can significantly mitigate the climate change impacts of food production, while at the same time creating employment opportunities in the farming sector, and making healthy foods more affordable for low-income groups.

These are all examples of measures that provide a ‘triple dividend’: they reduce the environmental impacts of production and consumption, while at the same time creating employment opportunities for people with lower qualifications and making the goods and services necessary for a life in dignity affordable for low-income households (De Schutter 2020; De Schutter et al. 2020). Such measures mostly pay for themselves, either because they have no budgetary implications (as is the case for land planning schemes), or because they increase public revenue to allow the state to pay for whatever public expenditures are needed (as with the introduction of a carbon tax).

If the first weakness of the conventional view is its lack of imagination, a second is its reliance on growth. The quest for growth is not sustainable as a means of expanding fiscal space and allowing investments in the greening of the economy or in social protection. It puts further pressure on resource use and results in higher levels of waste and pollution. The fabled ‘environmental Kuznets curve’ or other myths about ‘green growth’ or ‘ecological modernisation’ are increasingly being unmasked as fig leaves to obfuscate this tension. Growth, we suggest, cannot be a substitute for redistribution; and to address the twin challenges of poverty reduction and ecological transformation, the reduction of inequalities of wealth and income, not a general rise in affluence, should take priority. This is at the heart of the alternative we propose: a focus on reducing income and wealth inequalities as a means of supporting the greening of the economy and society.

3. The role of equality in the New Social Contract

We argue that the persistence of wealth and income inequalities is incompatible with ecological transformation, and that the fight against inequalities, rather than growth followed by redistribution of its outcomes, should take priority. The link is obvious at the macro level, once we consider that the more the wealth created is spread equally across the population, the easier it will be to reconcile the minimisation of environmental impacts with poverty-reduction objectives. If the benefits of increased prosperity are redistributed to the worse off in society or – even better – if increased prosperity is created more equally across the social hierarchy, less growth will be required to meet the basic needs of all. And because growing the economy cannot be done without increasing the use of resources and the production of waste, including greenhouse

gas emissions responsible for climate disruption (Jackson 2017; Parrique et al. 2019), it is imperative that, where the economy still must grow – where poverty reduction depends on the further creation of wealth – it should do so in ways that maximise its positive impacts on lifting people out of poverty and minimise its ecological impacts.

Beyond that macro-level relationship between ‘inclusive’ growth and the ecological transformation, our argument that reducing inequalities should be at the heart of the ecological transformation is based on four main arguments. First, in affluent societies, poverty should be understood as relative, not absolute. Therefore, the fight against poverty should be less about growing the pie to ensure resources that can be mobilised to combat extreme destitution, than about redistributing the wealth and resources that we already have. Second, growth is not only less necessary than usually presumed, but it can also be counterproductive, in the sense that a general rise in affluence creates new needs and therefore new instances of deprivation. Third, growing inequalities enable certain major economic actors to exert a disproportionate influence on political decision-making, allowing them to veto reforms if they perceive them as against their interests. Fourth, because of the links between inequality and consumption patterns, addressing inequalities must be a key component of any pathway towards resource-efficient and low-carbon societies that incorporates lifestyle changes. We briefly summarise the first three arguments before developing the fourth argument, which is more complex and more rarely discussed.

These are not the only arguments in favour of putting the fight against inequalities at the heart of the new eco-social contract (for a more complete picture, see Wilkinson and Pickett 2022). In addition to the arguments detailed below, it would be important to put a brake on the consumption patterns of the wealthiest groups of the population. Not only is the environmental footprint of the rich so large that its reduction is crucial to bringing the environmental crisis under control (GSDR 2019: 17; Chancel and Piketty 2015), but such lifestyles have to some extent become a norm for others to emulate. To the extent that this happens it would only bring the threat of an ecological breakdown nearer. Greater equality, moreover, is a central determinant of both health and social well-being. If government policy is to prioritise well-being over economic growth, the reduction of wealth and income inequalities should be a major part of the project. Finally, greater equality leads people to be more cooperative and mutually supportive (Uslaner and Brown 2005; Wilkinson and Pickett 2009: 233; Wilkinson et al. 2010; De Schutter and Dedeurwaerdere 2022: chapter 7). It would make us more willing to pull together and provide mutual support as we face environmental emergencies and disasters. While space limitations prevent us from developing these arguments further, they further strengthen the case for equality that we make here.

3.1 ‘Modern’ poverty is relative, not absolute

It is commonly thought that poverty is mainly about a lack of income, which deprives people of access to the basic goods or services they need. This definition of poverty is also that of the Sustainable Development Goals. But it has two major shortcomings.

First, this understanding of poverty fails to take into account that the provision of public goods can, at least partly, compensate for a lack of income. The level of incomes required to lead a decent life, allowing people not only to meet their basic needs but also to avoid this kind of social exclusion, depends on which goods and services are allocated on the basis of one's ability to pay: in societies in which education and health care are free, for instance, or in which subsidised housing is available for low income-earners, lower incomes may nevertheless allow for the enjoyment of social rights, whereas in societies that do not provide such public goods, higher incomes will be necessary.

Combating poverty therefore should not only be about raising the living standards of the lowest income-earners or the poorest households by increasing post-market social transfers. It should also be about reducing the gap between the richest and poorest social groups by providing public goods, and using pre-market measures to create conditions to integrate people in a more inclusive economy.

Viewing poverty simply as a lack of income is characterised by an even more significant defect. It is based on an understanding of poverty as *absolute* deprivation, whereas, in affluent societies at least, people in poverty are affected mainly by *relative* poverty. Poverty depends, in other words, not only on the range of goods and services within one's purchasing power, but also on one's position on the social ladder. The latter is what enables one to meet – or not – certain social expectations and thus to avoid the shame or stigma that results from social exclusion. As noted by the great sociologist Peter Townsend, working in the context of the United Kingdom: 'Individuals, families and groups in the population can be said to be in poverty when they lack the resources to obtain the type of diet, participate in the activities and have the living conditions and the amenities which are customary, or at least widely encouraged or approved in the societies to which they belong. Their resources are so seriously below those commanded by the average family that they are in effect excluded from ordinary patterns, customs and activities' (Townsend 1979: 31). A similar view was presented, albeit rather differently, by social anthropologist Marshall Sahlins, who remarked that: 'Poverty is not a certain small amount of goods, nor is it just a relation between means and ends; above all it is a relation between people. Poverty is a social status. As such it is an invention of civilisation. It has grown with civilisation ... as an invidious distinction between classes' (Sahlins 1974: 37). The centrality of relative poverty to the lives of people in poverty was shown in a more recent study covering both rich and poor countries. It showed that, despite the enormous differences in the material living conditions of those in poverty in rich and poor countries, the experience of the poor in both settings was dominated by their low social status and feelings of shame, failure, self-loathing and disrespect (Walker et al. 2013). These feelings are strong enough for it to be quite normal for people in poverty to spend money on items to do with social acceptance and participation rather than on necessities, such as food. (Our discussion of income differences and poverty in this chapter focuses on inequality within rather than between societies because social comparisons and ranking are crucial to understanding how they are experienced.)

3.2 The quest for growth may be counterproductive

It follows from the preceding argument that growth will be insufficient to combat ‘modern’ poverty unless it is combined with redistribution. But growth is not only insufficient to combat poverty in and of itself; it can also be counterproductive. Indeed, the more items are produced at scale and enjoyed by the larger part of the population, the more they become indispensable for all: being deprived of access to these items makes you feel excluded. With his usual lucidity, Keynes distinguished in this regard two classes among human needs: ‘those needs which are absolute in the sense that we feel them whatever the situation of our fellow human beings may be, and those which are relative only in that their satisfaction lifts us above, makes us feel superior to, our fellows’. He remarked that the needs of the second class, the ‘relative’ needs that result from a desire to keep up with our neighbours or even jump ahead of them ‘may indeed be insatiable; for the higher the general level the higher still are they’ (Keynes 1932: 365–366). The result is what another great economist of the twentieth century, J.K. Galbraith, called the ‘dependence effect’: while it is ostensibly intended to satisfy pre-existing needs, production also creates new needs, as what was once the privilege of a happy few becomes a legitimate expectation for all to acquire and to enjoy (Galbraith 1968: chapter XI).

Indeed, in his own contribution to this discussion, Fred Hirsch noted that, as general affluence increases, larger portions of household expenditure go to the purchase of ‘positional goods’, such as a college degree or a new car, which are sought after because they allow one to distinguish oneself from others, to claim a certain rank within society. A rise in general affluence annuls the value, to individuals, of what positional goods they may acquire because once a large part of the population has access to such goods, the reward disappears. The benefits expected from the progress of material wealth, and from its extension to all groups of society thanks to mass production, thus end up cancelling themselves out. As regards positional goods, the value of the good to the individual depends on others not having access to it: my impressive-looking car is of much less value to me if the vast majority of my fellows have equally impressive cars, and not just a decent bicycle and a free train pass (Brighouse and Swift 2006). This is also why people care not only about *absolute* income, allowing them to acquire what they need to lead a decent life, but also about *relative* income. If they want to be able to acquire something that enables them to distinguish themselves from their fellow citizens, they will have to be richer than them (Hirsch 1977: 36).

3.3 Political economy

There is a third reason why the growth of inequalities is incompatible with the ecological transition: more unequal societies find it more difficult to adopt transformative policies, both because a move towards sustainability would meet widespread opposition unless people feel that the inevitable burdens of change, and of the policies necessary to drive it forward, are shared fairly (Wilkinson and Pickett 2022; and 2009: 221–222), and because of elites’ veto power to oppose any change that might threaten their privileged position. In the absence of major redistributive policies, people in poverty,

including large portions of what Guy Standing calls the ‘precariat’ (Standing 2011) will oppose measures such as carbon taxes introduced to deal with a crisis created predominantly by the rich. But in addition to the influence of the financial markets on political decision-making, which de-democratises the state, it has been widely documented that policymaking has been systematically skewed in favour of the most powerful corporations in recent years. The ability particularly of large corporations to distort even democratic processes has less to do with outright corruption or lobbying than with their ability to present themselves as the champions of economies of scale and of efficiency gains through the segmentation of the production processes across jurisdictions, and their control of worldwide logistical networks. Mass consumption requires mass production, and the emptying out of democratic politics has often been the price paid for both.

Martin Gilens and Benjamin Page have illustrated how decision-making by elected representatives systematically favours large corporations – the economic elites – betraying the expectations of ordinary people (Gilens 2012; Gilens and Page 2014). And while their empirical work focuses on the situation in the United States, where money plays a particularly important role in politics (Stiglitz 2013; Drutman 2015), this is not exceptional. In fact, this phenomenon has become worse with the growth of inequalities over the past 40 years. A study covering 136 countries for the period 1981–2011 shows that ‘as income inequality increases, rich people enjoy greater political power and respect for [their] civil liberties than poor people do’ (Cole 2018). Capture by economic elites has gone global. Whereas once it was the exception, now it is the rule (George 2015). It leads not only to what, in its flagship 2017 *Trade and Development Report*, the United Nations Conference for Trade and Development (UNCTAD) calls ‘the revenge of the rentiers’ – a phenomenon by which ‘increasing market concentration in leading sectors of the global economy and the growing market and lobbying powers of dominant corporations are creating a new form of global rentier capitalism to the detriment of balanced and inclusive growth for the many’ (UNCTAD 2017: 219) – but also to the gradual dismantling of protections for workers and low-income households, and diminished funding of public services that can reduce inequality, but are subject to permanent assault (Wisman 2013).

3.4 Inequality breeds unsustainable consumption

Our fourth argument for putting the fight against inequalities at the heart of the ecological transformation is based on the links between inequalities and consumption patterns (Pybus et al. 2022). Income and wealth inequalities stimulate the drive for status, and for a kind of consumption that responds to status anxiety, the fear that one will not be valued adequately in the eyes of others (Ridgeway 2014), or that one will not fulfil social expectations (de Botton 2004).

3.4.1 Status consumption

Such a link exists, first, because inequality stimulates status competition and thus material consumption. We ‘want’ material things, for the most part, not merely because

of the comfort they provide, but for the message we send to those around us by owning or using them. This was a key insight of Veblen in his *Theory of the Leisure Class*: ‘the standard of expenditure which commonly guides our efforts’, he wrote more than a century ago, ‘is not the average, ordinary expenditure already achieved; it is an ideal of consumption that lies just beyond our reach, or to reach which requires some strain. The motive is emulation – the stimulus of an invidious comparison which prompts us to outdo those with whom we are in the habit of classing ourselves’ (Veblen 1994 [1899]: 64). This explains in part the permanent quest for more that characterises individual behaviour in more unequal societies: because ‘each class envies and emulates the class next above it in the social scale, while it rarely compares itself with those below or with those who are considerably in advance’ (id.), unequal societies stimulate a permanent race for status through consumption (see also Wilkinson and Pickett 2018: 152).

Indeed, social psychology has demonstrated that we attach more importance to our position in comparison with others against whom we rank ourselves than to our absolute levels of consumption (Dolan et al. 2008; Solnick and Hemenway 1998). Conversely, if we achieve greater equality, or if we move towards a society in which social positioning can be signalled by means other than consumption, status consumption decreases (Wilkinson and Pickett 2009: 226). Unsurprisingly therefore, whether it is measured by analysing the Google searches of consumers (and the frequency of searches on expensive brands) (Walasek and Brown 2015) or by analysing Twitter conversations (and the mentioning of such brands in these conversations) (Walasek et al. 2017), the attractiveness of conspicuous consumption is more important in more unequal societies. (It is also especially noticeable in urban settings, in which consumption is the privileged means to signal social status, due to the anonymity of the city (Currid-Halkett et al. 2019).

Status consumption leads to a specific form of planned obsolescence: as Fred Hirsch already noted (though he did not describe this as planned obsolescence), the more a good becomes widely available, the less it ‘signals’ social status (see also Ritzer 2001). Therefore, the search for status through consumption leads to a permanent quest for novel items that allow one to distinguish oneself from others: this explains the success of ‘brands’ (Mason, 1998), as well as the ‘Veblen paradox’, according to which, for certain goods, demand will increase with price, rather than decrease (Goenka and Thomas 2020).

3.4.2 Status anxiety

Status consumption is driven, in turn, by status anxiety. Status anxiety is higher in unequal societies because rank, by definition, matters more when differences between individuals or households are more pronounced (Wilkinson and Pickett 2018). Unequal societies therefore cause a specific type of stress: individuals fear that they will fall from one rank to the next, as a result of which they adopt a competitive attitude which consists of a quest for status above other objectives, at the expense both of their individual health and of social capital. Recent data on over 18,000 people in European countries, for example, confirms links between income inequality and physiological markers of inflammation (namely, high levels of concentration of C-reactive protein)

that are associated with chronic stress, with those in lower socioeconomic positions being worst affected (Layte et al. 2019). This is one important yet often underestimated reason why lower socio-economic status leads to lower life expectancy and poorer health: people in relative poverty experience greater stress due to economic insecurity and they are more subject to social status anxiety and social threat. This leads to a physiological response that increases the risks of heart disease, as well as of other pathologies such as type-2 diabetes and cancers (Tabassum et al. 2008; Tawakol et al. 2017), as well as mental ill health.

Inequality affects not only those with a lower socio-economic status, however, but also those on other ranks of the income distribution ladder. A 2007 cross-national survey of over 34,000 carried out in 31 European countries thus showed that respondents from low inequality countries reported less status anxiety (in response to the statement ‘some people look down on me because of my job situation or income’) than those in higher inequality countries at all points on the income rank curve (Layte and Whelan 2014). Indeed, in unequal societies, ‘status-seeking’ (which includes concerns about relative social position, awareness of social hierarchies and an assessment of how much the person relies on the opinions of other people) (Paskov et al. 2017), is more frequent and widespread than in more equal societies: where there is inequality, there is constant social comparison and a reduced sense of commonality and solidarity. And this is true at all income levels: the result is that, as all members worry about their social rank, social relationships are viewed as competitive rather than collaborative (Rodriguez-Bailon et al. 2020), resulting in heightened status anxiety and lowered social trust (Layte 2012; Delhey and Dragolov 2014).

Of course, being out of a job, living on a low income, not owning a home, or occupying a position perceived as inferior, all worsen status anxiety (Delhey et al. 2017). But status anxiety affects not only the lower ranks of society: for instance, levels of job satisfaction are reduced across all income groups in more unequal settings, perhaps related to concerns about the risk of being stuck at certain levels of the hierarchy in the absence of promotion, or of being demoted, or generally of not being able to meet societal expectations for success (Keshabyan and Day 2020). At the same time, status anxiety may be less significant at the two extremes of the income curve. At the lower end, socioeconomic disadvantage can sometimes lead to less status-seeking because in very unequal settings higher status can seem out of reach – ‘giving up’ rather than ‘keeping up with the Joneses’ (Delhey et al. 2017). At the higher end, among the richest part of the population, some studies suggest that status anxiety is less prevalent, and that higher levels of inequality may even lead to improved subjective well-being for those who are in the upper ranks: those in the highest quintile can ‘look down’ on others, leading to a sense of superiority which is a source of psychological benefit; and those in the second quintile can anticipate that they will climb up the ladder, a ‘tunnel effect’ (Hirschman and Rothschild 1973) that can itself bring about psychological benefits in the form of anticipated pleasure (Bartram 2022).

4. Conclusion

This chapter argues that the fight against inequalities of income and wealth should be central to the ecological transformation. Inequality can be reduced in two ways, however. One is by redistributing the wealth created by economic growth by means of tax-and-transfer policies: this is the classic role of the welfare state. Another approach is to seek to reduce inequality by transforming how the market itself operates: this is the role of an inclusive economy. The argument put forward here is also that this latter approach, pre-market rather than post-market, is far more promising. Indeed, as we face environmental breakdown, it may be the only viable long-term strategy. The implication is that more efforts should be made in support of the social and solidarity economy, economic democracy, and the reduction of working hours – reforms, in other words, that ensure that the economy works for the common good, so that compensatory measures are less needed (whether to repair the environmental costs of growth or to make up for the inequalities caused by the market). A sustainable economy is not simply one that minimises resource extraction and that recycles waste. It is also one that is inclusive by design, and in which choices are made democratically, by both the state and other social organisations.

References

- Bartram D. (2022) Does inequality exacerbate status anxiety among higher earners? A longitudinal evaluation, *International Journal of Comparative Sociology*, 63 (4), 184–200. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00207152221094815>
- Brighouse H. and Swift A. (2006) Equality, priority and positional goods, *Ethics*, 116 (3), 471–497.
- Chancel L. and Piketty T. (2015) Carbon and inequality: From Kyoto to Paris, Paris School of Economics.
- Cole W. (2018) Poor and powerless: Economic and political inequality in cross-national perspective, 1981–2011, *International Sociology*, 33 (3), 357–385.
- Currid-Halkett E., Lee H. and Painter G.D. (2019) Veblen goods and urban distinction: the economic geography of conspicuous consumption, *Journal of Regional Science*, 59 (1), 83–117.
- de Botton A. (2004) *Status anxiety*, Penguin Books.
- De Schutter O. (2020) Report of the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights to the 75th session of the General Assembly (A/75/181/Rev.1)(2020), UN.
- De Schutter O., Petel M., Detroux A. and Osinski A. (2020) ‘Building back better’: social justice in the green economy, *International Journal of Public Law and Policy*, 6 (4), 346–367.
- De Schutter O. and Dedeurwaerdere T. (2022) *Social innovation in the service of social and ecological transformation: The rise of the enabling state*, Routledge.
- Delhey J. and Dragolov G. (2014) Why inequality makes Europeans less happy: The role of distrust, status anxiety, and perceived conflict, *European Sociological Review*, 30 (2), 151–165.
- Delhey J., Schneickert C. and Steckermeier L.C. (2017) Sociocultural inequalities and status anxiety: redirecting the Spirit Level theory, *International Journal of Comparative Sociology*, 58 (3), 215–240. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002071521713799>

- Dolan P, Peasgood T. and White M. (2008) Do we really know what makes us happy? A review of the economic literature on the factors associated with subjective well-being, *Journal of Economic Psychology*, 29 (1), 94–122.
- Drutman L. (2015) *The business of America is lobbying: How corporations became politicized and politics became more corporate*, Oxford University Press.
- Galbraith J.K. (1968) *The affluent society*, Houghton Mifflin Co.
- George S. (2015) *Shadow sovereigns: How global corporations are seizing power*, Polity Press.
- Gilens M. (2012) *Affluence and influence: Economic inequality and political power in America*, Princeton University Press.
- Gilens M. and Page B. (2014) Testing theories of American politics: Elites, interest groups, and average citizens, *Perspectives on Politics*, 12 (3), 564–581.
- Goenka S. and Thomas M. (2020) The malleable morality of conspicuous consumption, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 118 (3), 562–583.
- GSDR (2019) *The future is now: Science for achieving sustainable development*, Global Sustainable Development Report, UN. 24797GSDR_report_2019.pdf (un.org)
- Hirsch F. (1977) *Social limits to growth*, Routledge.
- Hirschman A. and Rothschild M. (1973) The changing tolerance for income inequality in the course of economic development, *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 87 (4), 544–566.
- Jackson T. (2017) *Prosperity without growth: Foundations for the economy of tomorrow*, Routledge.
- Keshabyan A. and Day M.V. (2020) Concerned whether you'll make it in life? Status anxiety uniquely explains job satisfaction, *Frontiers in Psychology*, 11, 1523.
- Keynes J.M. (1932) Economic possibilities for our grandchildren, in *Essays in persuasion*, Harcourt Brace, 358–373.
- Layte R. (2012) The association between income inequality and mental health: Testing status anxiety, social capital, and neo-materialist explanations, *European Sociological Review*, 28 (4), 498–511.
- Layte R. and Whelan C.T. (2014) Who feels inferior? A test of the status anxiety hypothesis of social inequalities in health, *European Sociological Review*, 30 (4), 525–535.
- Layte R. et al. (2019) A comparative analysis of the status anxiety hypothesis of socio-economic inequalities in health based on 18,349 individuals in four countries and five cohort studies, *Scientific Reports*, 9, 796. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-018-37440-7>
- Mason R.S. (1998) *The economics of conspicuous consumption: Theory and thought since 1700*, Edward Elgar.
- Parrique T. et al. (2019) Decoupling debunked: Evidence and arguments against green growth as a sole strategy for sustainability, European Environmental Bureau.
- Paskov M., Gërxhani K. and van de Werfhorst H.G. (2017) Giving up on the Joneses? The relationship between income inequality and status-seeking, *European Sociological Review*, 33 (1), 112–123.
- Pybus K., Power M., Pickett K. and Wilkinson R. (2022) Income inequality, status consumption and status anxiety: an exploratory review of implications for sustainability and directions for future research, *Social Sciences and Humanities Open*, 6 (1), 100353. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssaho.2022.100353>
- Raworth K. (2017) *Doughnut economics: Seven ways to think like a 21st-century economist*, Random House.
- Ridgeway C.L. (2014) Why status matters for inequality, *American Sociological Review*, 79 (1), 1–16.

- Ritzer G. (2001) *Explorations in the sociology of consumption: Fast food, credit cards and casinos*, Sage Publications.
- Rodríguez-Bailón R., Sánchez-Rodríguez A., García-Sánchez E., Petkanopoulou K. and Willis G.B. (2020) Inequality is in the air: Contextual psychosocial effects of power and social class, *Current Opinion in Psychology*, 33, 120–125.
- Sahlins M. (1974) *Stone age economics*, Routledge.
- Solnick S.J. and Hemenway D. (1998) Is more always better? A survey on positional concerns, *Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization*, 37 (3), 373–383.
- Standing G. (2011) *The precariat. The new dangerous class*, Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Stiglitz J. (2013) *The price of inequality: How today's divided society endangers our future*, W.W. Norton & Co.
- Tabassum F. et al. (2008) Effects of socioeconomic position on inflammatory and hemostatic markers: A life-course analysis in the 1958 British birth cohort, *American Journal of Epidemiology*, 167 (11), 1332–1341. <https://doi.org/10.1093/aje/kwn055>
- Tawakol A. et al. (2017) Relation between resting amygdalar activity and cardiovascular events: a longitudinal and cohort study, *Lancet*, 389 (10017), 834–845.
- Townsend P. (1979) *Poverty in the United Kingdom: A survey of household resources and standards of living*, Penguin Books Ltd.
- UNCTAD (2017) *Trade and Development Report 2017. Beyond austerity: Towards a global new deal*, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development.
- Uslaner E.M. and Brown M. (2005) Inequality, trust, and civic engagement, *American Politics Research*, 33 (6), 868–894.
- Veblen T. (1994 [1899]) *The theory of the leisure class. an economic study of institutions*, Dover thrift editions.
- Walasek L. and Brown G.D.A. (2015) Income inequality and status seeking: Searching for positional goods in unequal U.S. States, *Psychological Science*, 26 (4), 527–533.
- Walasek L., Sudeep Bhatia S. and Brown G.D.A. (2017) Positional goods and the social rank hypothesis: Income inequality affects online chatter about high- and low-status brands on Twitter, *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 28 (1), 138–148.
- Walker R. et al. (2013) Poverty in global perspective, *Journal of Social Policy*, 42, 215–233.
- Wilkinson R. and Pickett K. (2009) *The spirit level: Why greater equality makes societies stronger*, Allen Lane.
- Wilkinson R. and Pickett K. (2018) *The inner level: How more equal societies reduce stress, restore sanity and improve everyone's well-being*, Allen Lane.
- Wilkinson R. and Pickett K. (2022) *From inequality to sustainability*, Deep Dive Paper 01, Earth4All, Club of Rome.
- Wilkinson R., Pickett K. and De Vogli R. (2010) Equality, sustainability, and quality of life, *British Medical Journal*, 341, c5816, 1138–1140.
- Wisman J.D. (2013) Wage stagnation, rising inequality and the financial crisis of 2008, *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, 37 (4), 921–945.

All links were checked on 06.02.2023.